

A MAGAZINE FOR GAMERS OVER 25

202P MAGAZINE

VOLUME 6 - SEPTEMBER 2006

TALISMANIA!

A look at PopCap's latest release

Inside Issue 6

- Madden '07 review
- Configuring a D-LINK
- War Rock preview
- Confessions of an Addict
- Gamer Profile: JollyRoger

Interview: PopCap Games

Understanding the group
that understands the "casual gamer"

A LOOK AT GAME DESIGNERS:
Richard Garriot, Scott Adams,
Sid Meier and Will Wright
20LD2PWN LANFEST RESULTS
AND MORE...

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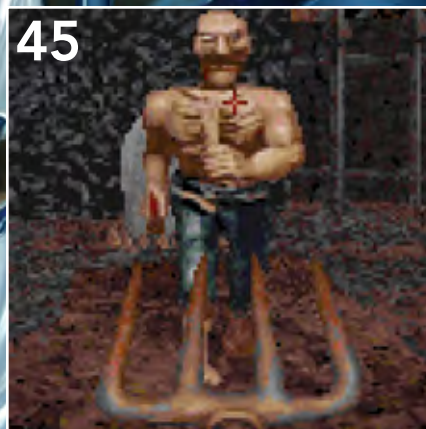
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POPCAP GAMES GET US HARDCORE INTO THE CASUAL GAME TALISMANIA. REVIEW BY CODEMOKEY ON PAGE 15.

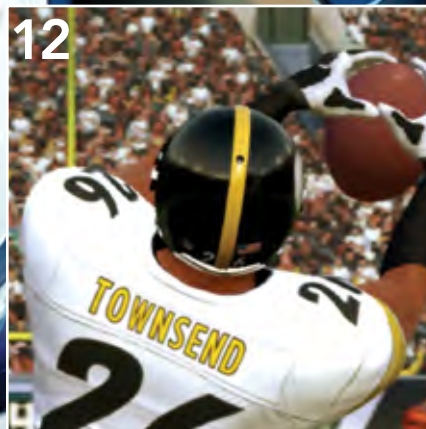
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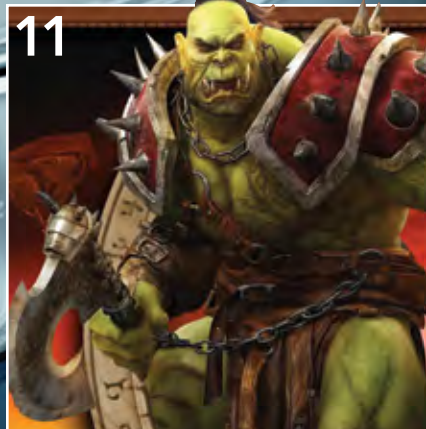
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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

PopCap Games for taking our interview seriously and giving us great answers to our questions. It is teams like this that make the game industry fun to work with.

Wikipedia.org for providing some facts and figures for information. It is nice to find a group of great people that are driving to collect all the facts of the world.

THE LEGAL STUFF

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THE EDITOR PWNs YOU!

I WANNA BE A GAME DESIGNER WHEN I GROW UP

by CodeMonkey

I always wanted to make games when I grew up. Honestly, I could not think of a better thing to do in life. When I was fourteen years old, I tried "making a game" on an old Macintosh without having a single clue on how a game was made. Needless to say, *MacPaint* didn't make all my dreams come true. Now I am thirty years old and I write code for a living...not games, but it's a step in the right direction! Oh, and on the side I also work on a magazine.

Many of my friends wanted to be police officers or firefighters, a few wanted to be G.I. Joe...whatever that was, but I always wanted to make video games. I haven't lived that dream as of yet, so all I can do now is try to interact with those that do live that life. I look at games differently than most gamers because I have done a little "indy game" development and I work in a development position.

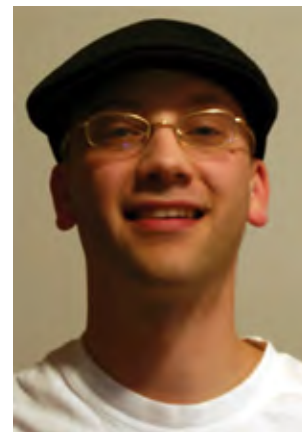
I'm not saying that gamers lack respect for the game studios, but many just want to entertain themselves and kick off their shoes after work in front of some *SimCity*, *Halo* or *Madden*. Gamers are amazed at the graphics and eye candy while I'm amazed at the amount of polygons, lighting, textures and design. You may find yourself talking about how fast *Need for Speed: Most Wanted* is, while I wonder how they managed to cache a whole course without accessing the DVD. I guess it is just another way of thinking.

This is why in my mind I hold most game designers high on a platform. Designers like Will Wright and his simulations or Richard Garriot and his infamous *Ultima* series. I wish I could watch John Carmack develop a game engine or shake hands with Shigeru Miyamoto. All of these brilliant minds have helped change the game entertainment industry at its foundation and built a set of childhood memories that are worth a fortune in gold. There are so many great game designers that it would not be possible to mention them all, but every member of this elite group is responsible for my childhood imaginations and drive to be a developer.

I understand that each one of these important figures is a normal person working a job to feed his or her family. I hope they understand the impact they've had on society – and continue to have every day we power on our console or computers. Everyone has a figure to look up to; some people love Orson Welles, Samuel Clemens ("Mark Twain") or Gene Roddenberry for *StarTrek*. Each of these figureheads has changed an industry and along the way the minds of many. The game industry is no different.

If I had to pick a single game developer that has changed my way of thinking, it would have to be Shigeru Miyamoto. There is not a single game design, in my opinion, that he has created incorrectly or that needed improvement. If he releases a game, I would not hesitate to buy it because he has never disappointed me in any design decision. *Donkey Kong*, *Super Mario Bros*, *Zelda*, *F-Zero*, *Star Fox*, *Mario Kart*, *Wave Race*, *Luigi's Mansion*, *Pikmin* and the list goes on. Are they the most dazzling games on the market? No. Not one of them matches the graphics of *Call of Duty 2* or *Oblivion*, but when it comes down to top notch quality games in all areas of design, Miyamoto impresses me endlessly.

My wife said to me, "why don't you have an issue featuring some game designers," and I thought it was a great idea. I asked a few writers to do a little research on their favorite designers and this issue features a few of their conclusions. I hope I can get more research for later issues on this topic as well, because I believe it's an area that few people consider when looking at a game. Next time you sit down in front of your favorite game, ask yourself, "how did they do it?"



Thanks,

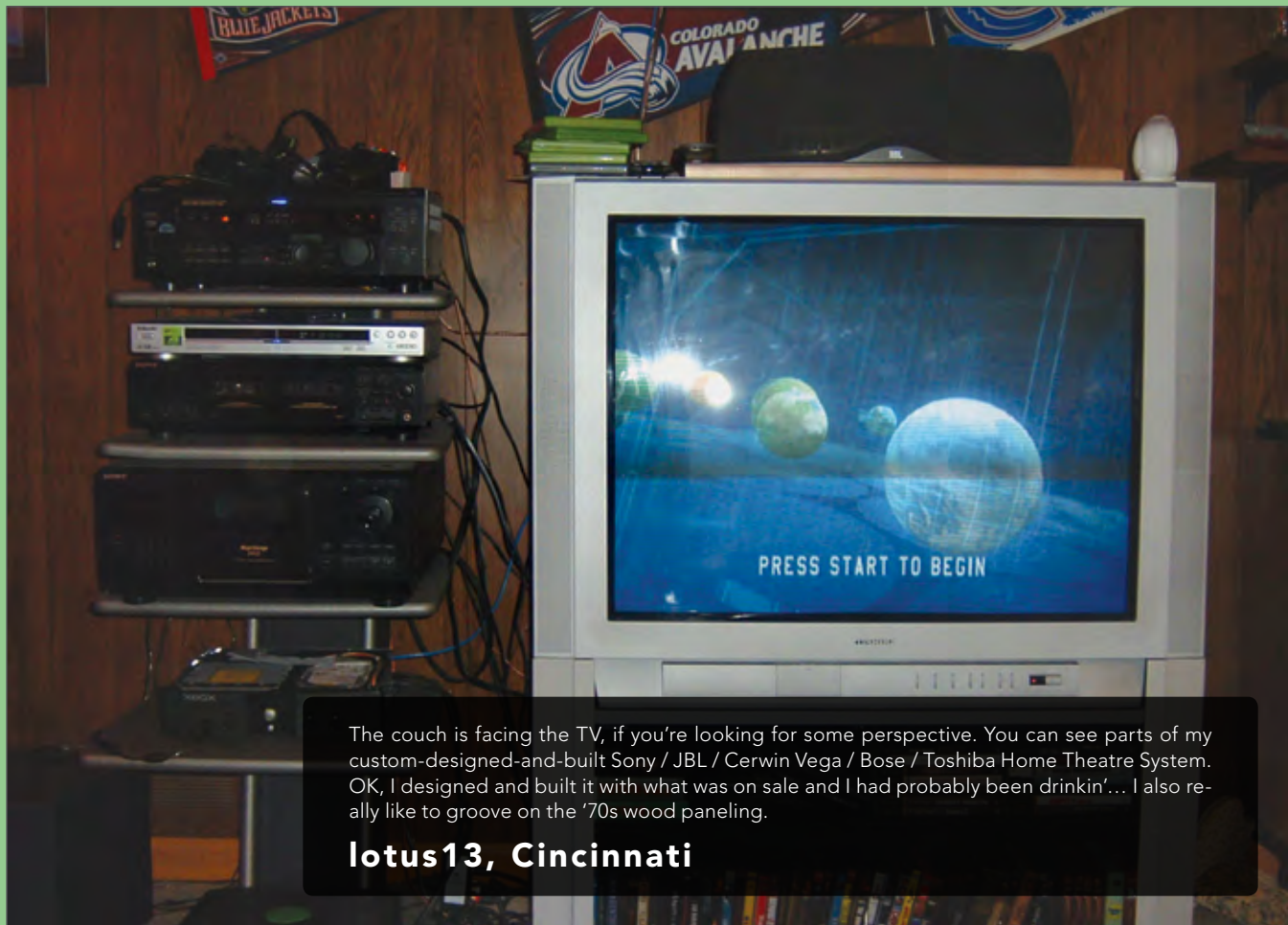
Derrick Schommer (CodeMonkey)

editor@2old2play.com

GAMING ROOMS AND RIGS

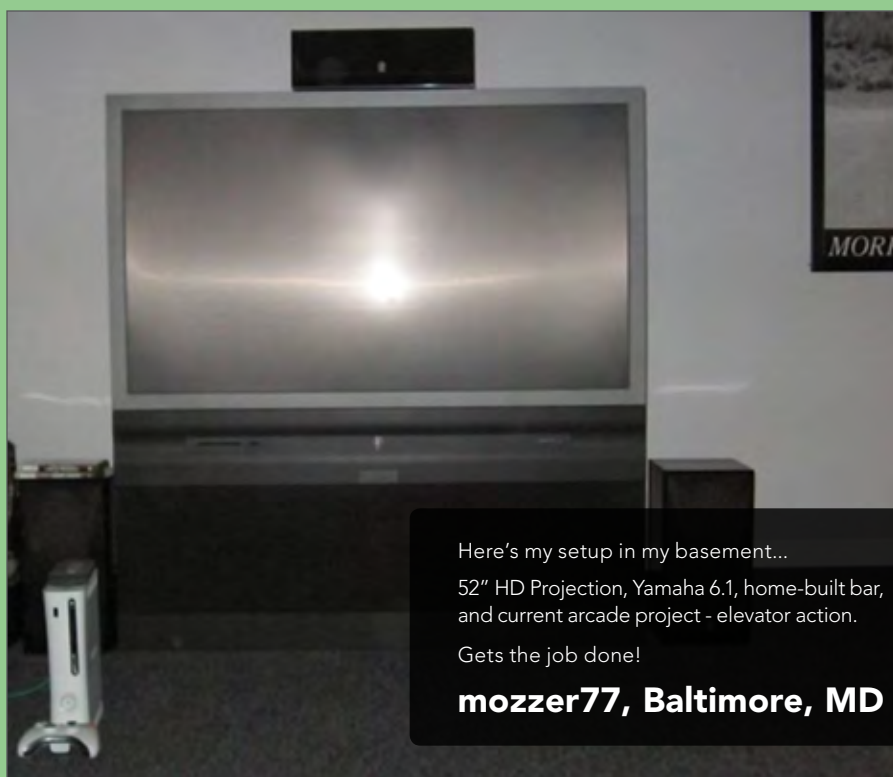
COMMUNITY MEMBERS SHOW OFF THEIR GAMING SETUPS

Feedback



The couch is facing the TV, if you're looking for some perspective. You can see parts of my custom-designed-and-built Sony / JBL / Cerwin Vega / Bose / Toshiba Home Theatre System. OK, I designed and built it with what was on sale and I had probably been drinkin'... I also really like to groove on the '70s wood paneling.

lotus13, Cincinnati



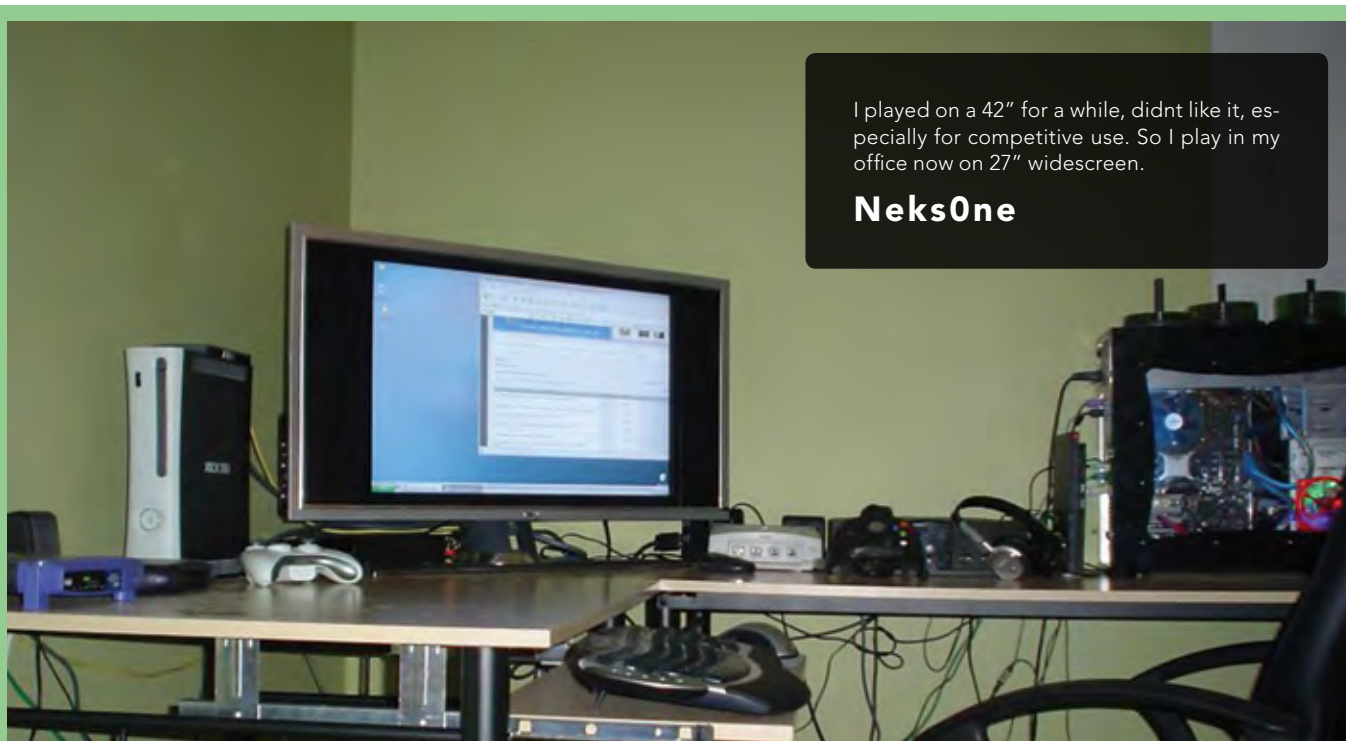
Here's my setup in my basement...

52" HD Projection, Yamaha 6.1, home-built bar, and current arcade project - elevator action.

Gets the job done!

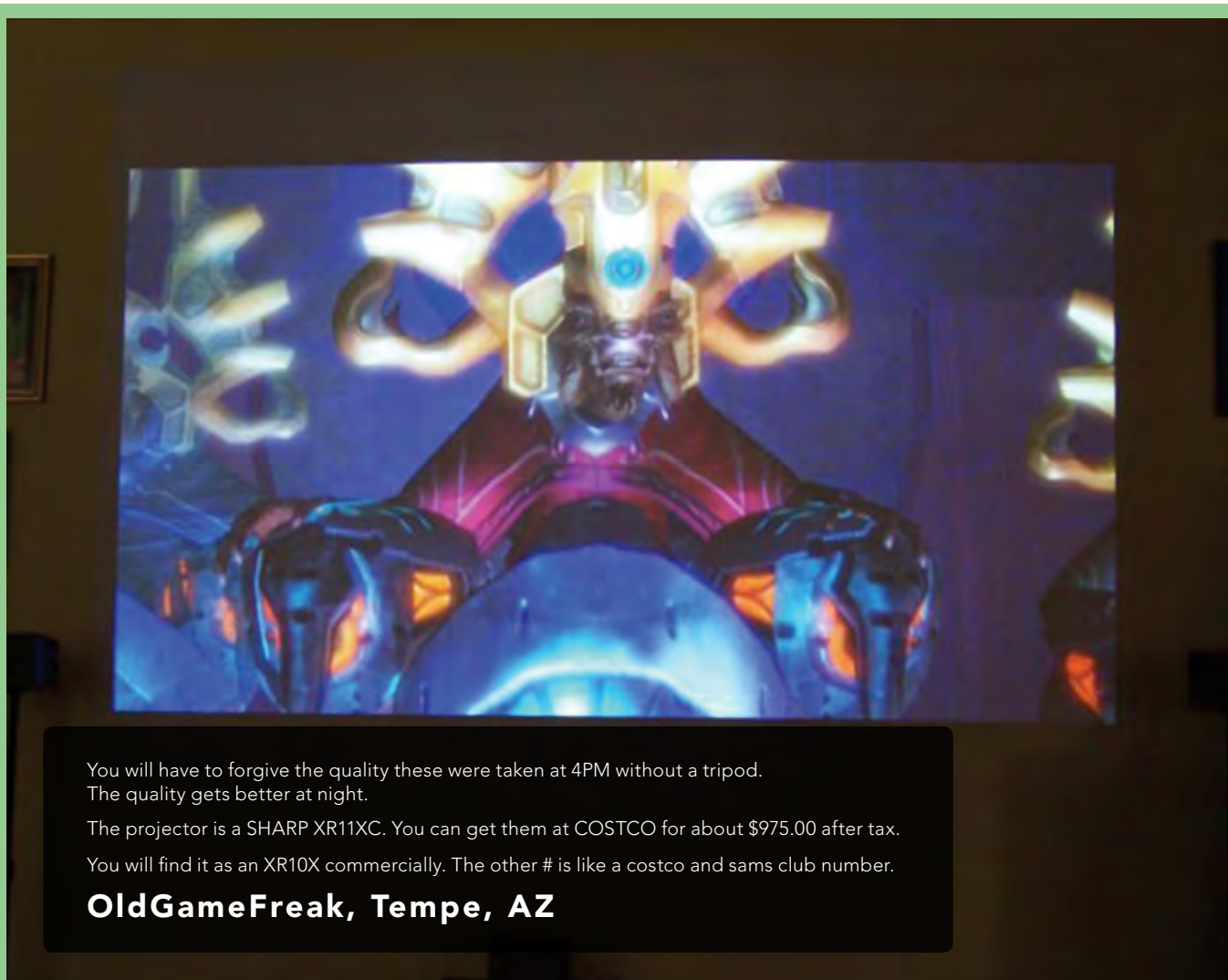
mozz77, Baltimore, MD

GAMING ROOMS AND RIGS (CONTINUED)



I played on a 42" for a while, didnt like it, especially for competitive use. So I play in my office now on 27" widescreen.

Neks0ne



You will have to forgive the quality these were taken at 4PM without a tripod. The quality gets better at night.

The projector is a SHARP XR11XC. You can get them at COSTCO for about \$975.00 after tax.

You will find it as an XR10X commercially. The other # is like a costco and sams club number.

OldGameFreak, Tempe, AZ



This episode consists of three personalities:

Doodirock: The man with the master plan to bring news and information to the twenty-five and older populous. His opinions can sometimes be extreme but his questions are on target with what a gamer is thinking.

Ebola2: A man with gaming views and opinions that align well with the typical gamer. He brings reality back after Doodi and Bliznot fall victim to off topics.

Bliznot: Often sarcastic attitude towards gaming and life in general (and anything doodirock says). Bliznot is there to break the seriousness with some off the wall topic of conversation that may make you say "wtf?" and spit your cola all over the keyboard.

EPISODE 29

This week covered a little bit on the new site enhancements coming down the pipe, including the infamous Senior Citizen Card (SCC) system. In the site news they also covered information about the new blog features and the final countdown for the writers contest (should be resolved before this edition goes to 'print').

EA discusses the new *Ultima Online* re-make and the casters go into detail about their opinions of the MMO and if they'd leave *World of Warcraft* to play it.

Also in the news, Microsoft enables user-created Xbox 360 games. Of course, doodirock and Bliznot want to make a 2old2play game starring them as all might ninjas. What does Ebola2 get to be? Listen and find out.

What is this podcast you speak of?! For those of you new to the world of podcasting or currently own an iPod yet have never subscribed to a podcast, you are missing a good deal of great information. A podcast is a radio show, similar to what you would hear on a radio station in your home town, but typically more focused towards something you actually want to hear. Many podcasts contain zero commercials and can offer hours of entertainment.

Like a radio show on your way to work, you will learn the personalities of the show and begin to relate to their perspectives (or argue against them). Podcasts such as 2old2type focus on the game entertainment genre, but you can find podcasts that cover all topics in all languages. It's simply amazing, and one of the best features of the Apple iPod.

You can obtain the 2old2type podcasts on www.2old2play.com for free by clicking on the episodes directly on the homepage, or through iTunes. If you're new to podcasts, you can download episode 1 through episode 29 from iTunes and start filling up your iPod's disk capacity (episodes usually run about 50-60 minutes).

If you would like to ask the team a question about gaming, you can leave them a message at (733) 527-2961.

2old2play Magazine
2old2play Magazine

Category: Video Games
Language: English
Total: 5 episodes

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WHO LOVES YA, BABY?

TANK REPORTS

ALL THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE FRONT LINES

EA & CRITERION GAMES ANNOUNCE BURNOUT 5

EA will publish a new truly next generation version in the Burnout series for Xbox 360 and PLAYSTATION 3. The menu subdividing the game play will be gone; every intersection has the possibility of being a Crash Junction! The new Drivers License feature will keep track of how much carnage and destruction you cause; additionally there will be boss fights when you reach certain levels. This will be built from the ground up for Xbox 360 and PS3.

<http://www.electronicarts.co.uk/news/8904/>



DEAD RISING

DEAD RISING FASTEST SELLING GAME TO DATE

The zombie killing masterpiece sold a copy every five seconds in its first two weeks making it the fastest selling Xbox 360 title to date. Unfortunately, other regions have to wait until September to get their zombie kill'in on.

<http://www.xboxic.com/news/1518>



PLATINUM HITS = CLASSICS ON XBOX 360

Microsoft has announced that they will start a line of games selling for \$29.99 called 'Classics.'

The first two games to be called Classics will be *Perfect Dark Zero* and *Kameo*, both 1st party titles. This should hit store shelves just in time for holiday shoppers - so people will compare \$29.99 Xbox 360 games to the \$59.99 PlayStation 3 games. This is Microsoft's counter punch I guess.

<http://2old2play.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=474&mode=&order=0&thold=0>

MICROSOFT SAYS CORE SYSTEM BUILT FOR \$149-\$199 PRICE POINT

Microsoft's Albert Penello has gone on record as saying that the CORE was designed to reach the price point of as low as \$149 over time. Could we see a price drop of core to \$199 for the holiday season? With the new cheaper processors and cheaper components, there certainly seems like there's room to drop the price. It will probably depend on what Wii's announced price will be and we'll probably see CORE drop to compete for holiday dollars.

<http://360stuff.blogspot.com/2006/08/xbox-360-eventually-149-199.html>

AMAZON MARKS DOWN THE 12 MONTH LIVE GOLD CARD

The MSRP on the 12 month Xbox Live Gold membership is \$50.00 and that's what you'll find it for in many stores. However, customers of Amazon told them that it was too expensive and they listened. Amazon has marked down the price of the membership card to \$36.00 saving you \$14.00 off a big box store or renewing through your dashboard. Shipping is also free if you pick Super Saver adding to the value.



http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000B9RI00/sr=8-1/qid=1155581360/ref=pd_bbs_1/104-6239008-8970365?ie=UTF8

SONY HALTS STAND-ALONE BLU-RAY DRIVES FOR PLAYSTATION 3

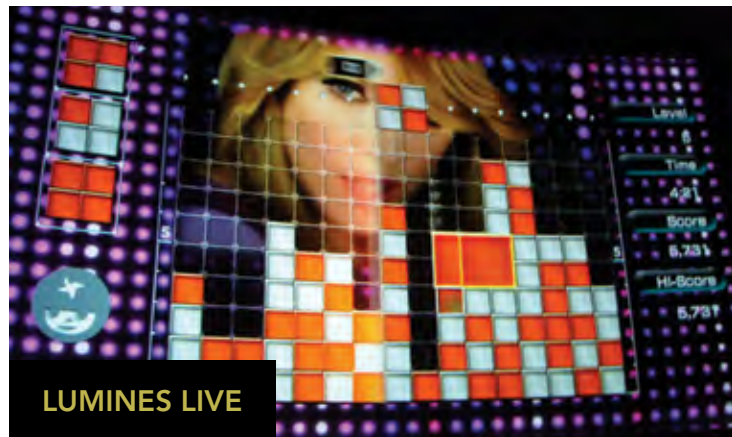
Sony has decided to delay plans for releasing their own stand alone Blu-Ray DVD decks. The Blu-Ray laser diodes are in very short supply right now and Sony's trying to get 2-million PS3's built for launch. This could be a good marketing move since Blu-Ray decks are \$1,000 so people looking for one of those will see the \$600 price of a PS3 as a bargain. For those people they'll be getting a cheap DVD deck and a game machine as a bonus. Sony's marketing machine working at it's best!

<http://www.digitimes.com/systems/a20060828PR206.html>

LUMINES LIVE WILL BE THE MOST EXPENSIVE XBLA GAME EVER

Just when you thought \$2.00 *Oblivion* horse armor and \$10.00 in *Chromebounds* part upgrades was getting a little too much. Along comes *Lumines Live* to make those seem like a bargain! *Lumines Live*, to start, will be the most expensive XBLA game to date. Despite being the most expensive game, you don't even buy the whole game for that money. You can progress only so far and you'll be asked for another few bucks to continue. Then when you get to the end of that "expansion," you'll be asked for some more money to continue. If you want to play *Lumines Live*, I'd recommend getting it for your PC for \$5.00 and send a message to developers that we're not going to tolerate the constant wallet leeching.

http://www.gamingbits.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1016&Itemid=2



LUMINES LIVE

TANK REPORTS (CONTINUED)



G4 TV VIDEO WALK-THROUGH OF PLAYSTATION 3 USER INTERFACE

G4 produced a short video on one of the PS3 development units. They run you through the basic interface and sub menus so you get an idea of what the

PS3 UI will look like. I'm told it's very similar to the PSP.

<http://crunchgear.com/2006/08/29/ps3-retail-unit-porn/>

PLAYSTATION 3 PROCESSING POWER CUT BY 50MHZ

The PS3's CELL processor was suppose to run at 550mhz and the memory was suppose to run at 700mhz. Rumor has it that the yields on the CELL processor are pretty bad right now (which is typical for brand new processors). Processors that don't run at 550mhz or better typically wouldn't make the cut and are essentially not usable in the PS3. So by dropping the spec to 500mhz, many more processors can pass the mark reducing waste. Since Sony's trying to get 2-million units made for launch, they need all the processors they can get.

<http://www.theinquirer.net/default.aspx?article=33995>

PLAYSTATION 3 TO LAUNCH WITH 700,000 UNITS PER TERRITORY

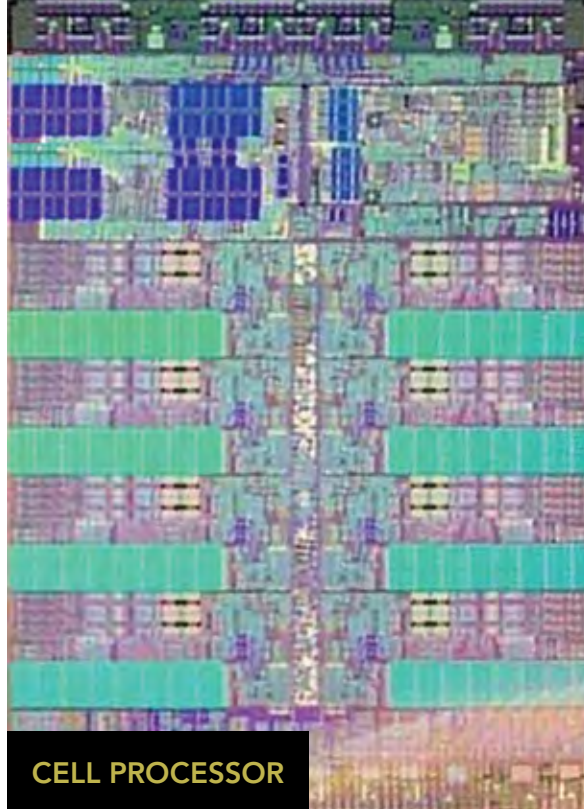
A story broke a few weeks ago about the launch numbers Sony will have on the PS3. They will launch three territories at the same time with 2-million units total, so around 700,000 per territory. It's not known what the split between the two SKU's will be. However, some analysts are saying that number could be cut in half due to component shortages. So a launch that looks better than the Xbox 360's 500,000 suddenly becomes worse to 360,000. Only time will tell as Sony ramps up production but Sony is saying they have capacity to make 2-million units a month and expects to deliver 4-million by the end of the year.

<http://www.computerandvideogames.com/article.php?id=144796>

SPORE MAY COME TO NINTENDO DS

Will Right is evaluating the DS and if he can get SPORE to work on it. He really likes the dual screens and the touch sensitivity and thinks he can work with it.

http://www.nintendorevolution.ca/08202006/08/nintendo_ds_preview_spore



GAME STUDIO GRAND TOUR

YOU BLOGGED THIS: SOUND OFF LIKE YOU'VE GOT A PAIR

If there was a game developer studio that you could tour and meet the makers, ask questions and socialize with... what developer would it be?

Bungie. I'd shave my head beforehand, gank Frankie and take his job. Plus, you know, screen shots of Halo 3...

Drost, Stillwater, OK



For me, I'd have to say Blizzard. I'd love to sit down and meet the makers of the biggest MMORPG in history and ask them "How do you do it? How do you keep it all running?" and see what history these people have that culminated to the historical WoW craze.

CodeMonkey, New Hampshire



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

I would like to visit... Bungie. At any point in the company's history, from Alex's basement when he was an MS employee, to there new digs, which are supposedly a former hardware store. If it was really old time stuff, then I would say Infocom, or Microprose way back in the day.

Smithcraft, Seattle, WA



Tiburon Studios (aka the EA studio that produces Madden). I chose them because I hate traveling and they are in my backyard - Orlando. Plus, I wouldn't mind bitch-slapping Madden's head producer for introducing a yearly gimmick to the franchise instead of streamlining the game play.

KingDrewsky, Deland, FL

I hate tours and if i'm touring anything it's the Playboy Mansion.

Count-Fartula



PLAYBOY MANSION

Nintendo.

SirPoonga, WI

Bungie.

GIJoeBob

I would say Bungie as well.

budman24, Lynn, MA

I'm too lazy to look it up right now, but I'd like to visit whoever developed Big Mutha Truckers 2 and beat the snot out of them for representing everything that's wrong with the game industry.

[Editors note: Eutechnyx developed Big Mutha Truckers 2 and it was released by THQ.]

jtgjr007, Nebraska



CONFESSIONS OF AN ADDICT...

I'M STUCK IN AZEROTH!

By XSSmoke

Where to begin? Let's start with the fact that I missed last month's article (Weekend Rentals) pretty much due to my insatiable appetite for a game I had never even looked at before. Let's take a look at the facts in the beginning stages of my soul being consumed...

- 1) Imagine 120 hours of your life put into said game over the first eleven days of playing it.
- 2) I found myself crashing out for bed around 3-4 am every night, while not highly concerned with the fact I get up at 7:30 am each day for work.
- 3) Not even during my Halo 2 fanboy peak had I ever got up before work to squeeze in some playing time.
- 4) When I slept, it took all of 2 days for the dreams to start.
- 5) I was supposed to write an article last month... I can barely remember what month last month was.
- 6) I used to play Halo 2 on my PC every day. I have played it twice in two months now. Possibly because I couldn't get to my computer.
- 7) There is a sun?
- 8) I have friends who get together every weekend. Or I did anyway... maybe I still do. I'm not sure. It could just be the voices in my head.

And there you have it. The game is of course *World of Warcraft* and I am just another lost soul among millions. Is it the game's fault or my own? Well of course, it's not the game's fault; I am not going to blame a game for my playing habits. I could, but that would honestly just be a silly thing to do. Truly, the fault lies with my "friend" who bought me the game and just told me to, "try it." It must completely be his fault, so for all those who knew me before the addiction, blame him.

It's not as if I didn't know it was going to happen, though. I have been trying to avoid this game, always knowing the effects it would no doubt have upon my poor defenseless body. However, I fell into the age old trap of peer pressure and the natural curiosity of the unknown. A taste is all it took and I was gone. The first night was like a blur and I am not even sure where I woke up. All I know is the night before was a whirl of colors and sounds unlike any I had experienced. It wasn't a quick fix; the effects lasted for hours and hours on end. By the time the weekend was done, I had played for 36 of the 48 hours that were available to me. It felt like I had taken only a sip from the Golden Goblet which held the Elixir of the Gods...

I can see why so many people on the outside hate this game. If you knew exactly what it did to people then you do not hate it enough. There are some of you that are not into RPG games and it is those that may not truly be hooked and are safe from its evil trappings. Play your football games and shooters and you will live knowing that you are partaking in the "safe" games. However, if you ingest this cookie of desire and are at all in touch with the life of a fantasy role, then be warned, you may need to have therapy and attend anonymous meetings later on.

The game is *WoW*. Is it a game or an addiction?. When they told me not to forget to eat, I thought it was just a silly joke and played it off as nothing. I am pretty sure my caretaker, who shall be called "Ice," does manage to shove food into me at certain intervals. I owe a lot to this strong willed woman. She puts up with an addiction that really isn't my doing.

Oh, one more thing... If you want to find me, my name in *WoW* is Xorlin, and I can be found on the realm "Agamaggan," somewhere between the Ironforge auction house and the dangerous perils of the Desolace outback. If you come looking for me, be wary of the evil Horde that lurk around the corners just waiting to attack unsuspecting Alliance.

I must return and uphold the honor of my dwarven brethren now. I shall, however, leave you with a closing statement... Real life just takes away from *WoW* time.



MADDEN 07

IN-DEPTH GAME REVIEW

By MTK005



By now, I'm sure most gamers know all about John Madden, his game, and the history of one of the most successful game series of all time. Review or not, most football fans pre-order this game every year. If you show up at midnight to your local GameStop the night it's released (as I did), you're likely to see 40-50 (or more) people hanging out, waiting to get their copy, go home, play for hours and roll into work or school after 3 hours of sleep.

I have a confession to make before I start. My name is MTK and I'm a self ascribed EA fanboy. I've only ever owned two 2K Sports games and have always bought EA every year. I never owned a 2K football game, but I've heard a lot, since 2K fanboys are quite loud with their opinions.

Regardless of my fanboy status, I'm going to try and give the most fair and honest review I possibly can. I picked this game up at 12:16 am on 8/22/06, and here is my "I've owned this game for 60 hours" review.

FRANCHISE MODE

Franchise mode has been around a long time, and it's become such a normal part of the game that it's hard to get in any changes. This year, EA tried a few tweaks for the 360, and I'm still not sure how I feel about them. The easy tweaks to describe come from a lot of the in-game play, whether it is the pre-game entrances for each team or the cool videos of your team walking up to the line for the next play. The more interesting ones are a sliding bar for each player's happiness and the presence of Hall of Fame players in your franchise. The easy one to discuss is the happy-scale, since it's fairly intuitive. This is one step further from EA's previous meters – instead of having to go to the management screen for the specific player, you can see a little bar under the player icon on your roster and in some menus you can see what he desires most: a good team, playing time, or money, etc. This helps you keep your team morale up, and we all know that a happy team is more likely to be successful.

The Hall of Famers (HoF) are a different story. EA uses a system called the "Madden Gamer Level" (which I'll explain later) to track your progress through the game and unlock items for you, much as the Madden Points did in the past. When you attain a higher Madden Gamer Level (MGL), you automatically unlock more HoF players, instead of buying those Madden Cards from previous years.

Those of you who have played *MVP Baseball* with its HoF system will understand this system a little bit better. The problem, though, is that once you unlock these guys, they're in your roster. And there is no option, as in *MVP Baseball*, to not allow these players into your franchise rosters. So, any crappy team could pick up Lynn Swan, for example, and there's nothing I can do about it.

Other than those items, I haven't found anything terribly new or interesting here. EA has definitely kicked up the realism however; when I played the Colts in Week 1 (with my beloved Giants), Peyton Manning audibled something (or more than once) on virtually every play.

SUPERSTAR MODE

Superstar mode is back this year after being out in 06 and not on the list for this year. EA decided that it could cram this into the 360 version, and it seems to be the biggest reason for getting this game.

In this mode, you play as the player you create, and only as him. If you're a RB, you run your plays and you block or roll out for passes. You can assume control of the defense, but only if you choose to. Otherwise, you sit the bench and watch.

And if you think that may be difficult, you have to realize that, unlike previous years, you cannot just adjust your created player numerically, making yourself perfect in every facet of the game. To be good, you have to master the Mini Games, which takes some time.



Another side note/bug issue I noticed in this mode – don't try and do something before it has it on your schedule. With my first Superstar (whom I had to restart from the beginning), I noticed in the menu that you can go to the agent list before the calendar prompts you to get one. I did so and hired an agent two days early. When it hit the agent signing day on my calendar, I went to the Agent list from the calendar and while I could hire and fire agents as many times as I want, somehow me having one already screwed up the game and I was stuck in that menu until I went back to Dashboard and restarted the game, which as you can imagine was very annoying.

MADDEN 07 (CONTINUED)

This mode can be the most rewarding, however, since you can play yourself right into the Hall of Fame.

MINI GAMES

As I mentioned before, the mini-games are not something you can expect to excel at right out of the box. Everyone does both the 40 yard dash and the bench press, and then you get a role-specific mini game. For example, RBs and LBs get a running/run stopping game while QBs/Receivers/DBs get a passing/receiving game. Practice makes perfect, so I wouldn't try to create a player for your Franchise or Superstar mode until you've mastered these techniques.

ONLINE

For a lot of us at 2old2play, the online portion makes the game. That's why a *Chromebonds* is so successful versus a deeper, better Single Player game like *Prey*. So to test this mode and put my "elite Madden skills" to the test, I enlisted my clan mate Stryker in an online throw down. We had both the game running and a 360 chat connection going the whole time, and there was rarely any noticeable lag. The only lag was during the video sequences. However, I do know others have had problems with lag.



I'm not big on playing sporting games online, but I had a blast trash talking and analyzing plays while taking my G-Men to a 21-7 victory. If you like playing real folks, this is the mode for you. Also, beware of your friends list, as someone else who owns the game can challenge you in your franchise and ruin your perfect season.

MADDEN GAMER LEVEL

The offspring of the Madden points is EA's new way of letting you track your progress and skill level and keep you playing the game. The system is akin to *Halo's* level design (for example, I'm now a 4, whereas Stryker is a 3) and also helps in getting you matches online where you won't get pwned by some crazy Timmy. Unlike *Halo*, however, it's not based on your performance online, just on how often and well you play the overall game. There are achievements associated with attaining different levels, and you also unlock the Hall of Fame players.



UI (USER INTERFACE)

This is one of my biggest bones of contention with this game, and it is semi-frustrating. Anyone who has played *NCAA 07* will know the UI is very similar with scrolling menus as opposed to entering a specific mode. Additionally, if you hit "B" enough times you'll end up back where you were before you hit "B", not at a main menu. It's harder to explain than it is to try.

The problem, however, is that with *NCAA* it works, whereas *Madden* is less intuitive. *NCAA* gave you some visual background clues as to where you are in the menus, whereas my *Madden* background has never changed from my team specific one. It doesn't even rotate players; it's just Jeremy Shockey, all the time. This system makes it very hard to find what you are looking for some times, as it's not a very intuitive system.

Additionally, the menu skips somewhat, as if the code is too clunky for the 360 to process. It's hard to believe that EA could screw this up to make a "next-gen" machine have menu blips like an old Xbox, but it did. I've seen much more intensive games not have this problem (like *Chromebonds*) so I'm sure this is just EA's bad programming at work.



MADDEN 07 (CONTINUED)

OTHER NOTES

This is my place to vent on other items I found wrong or weird with this game that I cannot fit into other sections. I'll avoid discussing the bugs that have already been pointed out (Fatigue) and get on to my own issues.

First off, there is no menu function to download the most recent roster update. EA apparently decides to prompt you on this whenever they feel like after you've signed into online mode. I was almost into my online game with Stryker before it told me (not asked me) that I had to download an online roster.

Secondly, if you've made a created player and saved your roster but decide to discard it, you can delete that saved roster, but it's hard to reset your rosters to the disc default. Stryker had a default roster saved to his 360 that he could load, mine did not. There was no "hit X to load default rosters" prompt or anything so I again had to go back to the dashboard to clear everything.

Third, no matter what mode you play, the in-game announcer is not John Madden. It's some radio guy, and he's not nearly as good. Next year, give me Al Michaels Please.

Finally, when I went to make the rosters accurate (Ty Law to the Chiefs, Junior Seau to the Pats, etc) I found that even in roster edit mode (i.e. not signed into a franchise or superstar) it was a pain to get guys to their correct team, since some of the menu



controls are clunky (hit RT to bring up the scroll bar, the hit the stick to the right while holding RT to go to the other side, etc). Yet another obstacle to getting the Madden player to a point where they are happy with the realism.

To be good, you have to master the Mini Games, which takes some time.

VERDICT

Well, if you've made it this far I have to give you credit, since this is longer than I expected. On a scale of 1 to 10, I'd have to give this game a 7.5.

Overall, it's the same old *Madden*, but with upgraded graphics. It's still a lot of fun when you actually get into the game, which is a big chunk of how you have to evaluate this. EA loses points on the announcer, but watching Peyton audible 4 million times made up for it. The bugs, glitches and menus are an issue, but it's only between games, so it's easily overcome.

To end this, I'll go back to where I started and my self-determined mission to be fair and honest. I feel that, had EA not gotten the exclusive license, this game would be a lot better. I'm not saying I'd be buying NFL 2K7 right now, but competition makes everyone up their game and skills, which leads to a better end-product for consumers.

Also, I'd still have MLB players in the MVP series since 2K wouldn't be making a crappy baseball game, but that's a story for another day.



TALISMANIA BY POPCAP GAMES

DO YOU FANCY YOURSELF A GREEK LEGEND?

By CodeMonkey

Talismania is a puzzle game jointly developed by RocketJump Games and PopCap Games, and published by GameHouse. It was released on August 3rd, 2006. In the game, you play King Midas, who has accidentally transformed his daughter, Marygold, into a golden statue with the magical Midas Touch. The Greek god Zeus will agree to reverse her transformation if Midas uses magical talismans to create money to spend on others instead of himself, to atone for his sins of greed. To help him with this task, Zeus has presented Midas with a team of builders, so that he can rebuild various buildings and landmarks across the kingdom.

Talismania is the newest arrival from PopCap Games. This puzzle game is slightly more addictive than any other game PopCap has in its library to date. I would gather that it is more addictive and fun than *Tetris* was fifteen years ago. *Talismania* is like a good Merlot, simple in flavor but presents a strong satisfaction.

After receiving the press release from PopCap Games that announced this new arrival, I went out and downloaded the demo to give it a try. The game contained some natural draw to me that I could not describe. It might be the nature of puzzle games and their ability to quickly hook you like a fish to a worm. A few days later, I had finished the main story mode of the game and sat back with a satisfied look on my face, "I beat it."

THE MODES

There are two modes to *Talismania*: Story Mode and Hero Mode. It is clear from the start that Hero Mode is locked, so you must complete some of the Story Mode before unlocking it. The two modes share most of the same style except Hero Mode is a timed puzzle whereas Story Mode is not. You must finish the puzzle before time runs out – the more time you have the more points you earn. This is unlike Story Mode, where you have all the time in the world to finish a puzzle and have the opportunity to perfect your techniques.

THE GAMEPLAY

The game play is simple yet intriguing enough to keep you addicted. Each level pits you in a hexagonal grid maze of tiles that you can spin clockwise by right-clicking or counter-clockwise by left-clicking. Every tile has two or more tunnel-like pathways to guide a beam of light from one talisman to another. You are given one or more pairs of talismans which you must connect through this beam of light.

Once you spin the tiles so the beams of light link you will receive a number of coins for each tile between the two talismans.

The coins you collect will be made of bronze, silver, or gold. The goal is to collect as much money as possible throughout the level. Once you link two talismans all the tiles that were part of the link are converted into coins and new ones drop down (in a fashion similar to *Hexic*).

The coins you collect help Midas build monuments, temples and other architecture to complete Zeus's task. As you collect coins, your *Talisman Meter* will rise. This meter is right at the top of the level in the letters of TALISMAN. They move from bronze to silver and finally to gold as you build paths. Watch out, however, because the meter drains while you're building paths, so it is in your best interest to build them fast. When you hit silver or gold, the next talisman set will be made of that respective material. The gold talismans (shaped like lions) will convert the tiles into gold coins, the silver (unicorns) into silver coins, and bronze (owls) into the most basic coin.

A *Talisman* master will work hard to complete the tasks quickly in order to keep gold

talismans on the board and score the highest points by bringing in the most gold coins. Once you've filled your gold scale to its maximum goal (written under the scale) you will defeat the level.

There are five levels in each *chapter* of the story and a total of eight *chapters*.

As you can see by my completed map I have all the chapters finalized, but not all of the structures are built with gold! That is because I am not yet talented enough to receive large amounts of gold talismans for each chapter. Each time you build a part of the



TALISMANIA BY POPCAP GAMES (CONTINUED)

required architecture, it uses your money to buy the most expensive material. If you notice in the “Colossus” chapter I managed to make a silver statue except for the right arm – that sucker is gold! Unfortunately, I was unable to build a full gold statue due to lack of skill.



You cannot really lose in Story Mode, but you may not complete the story with all gold monuments. You are not able to go back and redo the chapters without starting a fresh game, so do it perfectly the first time or deal with the consequences – this is part of the challenge and replayability factor. Didn't do it perfect? Start over!

THE CHALLENGE

Talismania's Story Mode starts out fairly tame. Initially you believe it's a “simple puzzle game” until you see your first monster. The game contains a host of mythological monster tiles that will appear as the levels increase in difficulty. Any number of monster tiles can be on a puzzle and the more you find the harder the game becomes. You may find yourself up against a Medusa tile where she will randomly turn your tiles into stone; useless for gathering coins, if you do not cross her path with the talisman beam (after all, she's a tile like all others).

You cannot rotate monster tiles and this adds an increased level of difficulty. They are static tiles, some which will move on their own after you complete a talisman link and do not include them. Each time you complete a link and you do not include a monster it will perform its own specific action. For example, a Minotaur tile rips through your tiles, making them useless for coins, by charging in a straight line in a random direction. The Acid Slime spits acid on your coin scale and eats away a few coins. A red Acid Slime will chew away bonus stars, a Siren drains your *Talisman Meter* and a Kraken chews on a percentage of coins you just earned by completing the link (and not including him).

To make matters worse, an Epic Monster is like all other monsters but requires two turns to kill. That means you're going to take a penalty in most situations unless you are fast and can destroy them with another pair of talismans on the board (or jumping into *Talismania Mode* - see below).

The last ramp of difficulty arrives when you see your first animated tile. This little tile spins around in a circle and you can select a position for it by right or left clicking but, after a few seconds, it will begin moving again. If you plan to use them in your path you must do it quickly or continue to go back and join them when they re-animate. However, you gain more points for using these tricky tiles.

TALISMANIA MODE

A puzzle game isn't complete without many bonus opportunities. As you're completing levels and making really skillful moves, you gain one or more stars. These stars can be used to go into *Talismania Mode* for a number of seconds (depending on the total stars you have accrued). Once in this mode you quickly click the tiles on the hexagonal maze and they will turn instantly into coins as if you linked two talismans. If you can click all the tiles, you will gain a large quantity of coins (perhaps enough to complete the level without further work).

In later levels, I found this to be extremely important for destroying a number of annoying monster tiles. When I was in a situation where I had no easy paths to destroy all the monsters and I had five monster tiles on my screen in a single turn, the fastest way to destroy them was to enter *Talismania Mode* and target them for destruction (and coins). However, since this mode requires you to build up more stars by doing fantastic maneuvers it should only be used in times of desperation or if you know you will be able to complete the level quickly after using it.

BONUS CHEST

The bonus chest, usually sitting beside Midas in the far-right corner, is initially locked. To open the chest you must complete the entire level in a specific number of turns determined by the number on the chest. This is your incentive to build long pathways in short time. A turn is initiated when you link two talismans together.



If you receive the bonus chest, you will be handed a large stack of additional coins at the end of the level. These coins are valuable for those trying to build completely gold monuments.

TALISMANIA BY POPCAP GAMES (CONTINUED)

SPECIAL TILES

Talismania does not come with all curses and monsters. Some tiles that show up are there to help you. The Bonus Tile gives you a five-coin bonus if you complete a link with this tile in your path. The Power Tile fires a lightning bolt (from Zeus) down in a straight line and all tiles in its path become coins (including monster tiles). There is a Freeze Tile which will freeze the turn counter on the Bonus Chest so that you have a few free turns to work with.

There are two other tiles that must be mentioned: the Combo Tile, and Pandora Tile. The Combo Tile is a tile that has four branches and you must link four beams into the tile. The beams must all be the same talisman type: bronze, silver, or gold. If you can link all four beams into one of these tiles, you get a five-star bonus and all the talismans and paths utilized are turned into coins. The downfall is that it takes some time to complete and your *Talisman Meter* will probably suffer for your patience.

The Pandora Tile can be good or bad (isn't that always the way with her?) It has eight branch pathways running through it and is easy to incorporate into a path, sometimes unavoidable. Once you turn it into a coin, it is replaced by a random bonus tile or monster tile. Good luck.

THE STORY

Ok, hold your breath for a minute... you may play this game and learn a bit about history. I apologize now to those gamers that want mindless game entertainment. When you complete certain structures or statues, you are given facts about mythological history. These are "fun facts" that you probably should have taken notes on in sixth grade.

The game does indeed have a story but I must admit... I liked the puzzles too much to pay close attention to it. I do know that each chapter had a cartoon-like scroll that had words and pictures. I just clicked "OK" and moved to the next chapter. I apologize up front to the story designer and promise to read it if the story comes out in hardcover.

THE MUSIC SCORE

The music, by Somatone Productions, was perfect for this game. These folks also did the music for *Metal of Honor* on the PlayStation 2 along with a few Disney games and Indie games. The audio has almost an Egyptian rhythm mixed with a new aged techno which is best summed up by one word: awesome.

The music is clear and professional. This is the type of audio rhythm that one could listen to in their car on the commute to work. The sound is fluid, relaxing and contains an addictive beat. Those with good bass boxes and sound systems will appreciate the musical score.

THE EYE CANDY

The graphics remind me of *Zuma* on the Xbox 360 with a bit more of a cartoon aspect. The story and characters are definitely set in a *Super Deformed* anime style world. The graphics are as clear and professional as the sound quality but are not mind-boggling next-generation graphics that you'd see in *Call of Duty 2* or *Madden 07*. They are built perfectly for the game atmosphere and make you feel like you got your \$19.95 worth.

HIGH SCORE

The score is everything. You want to have the best score in your neighborhood and a puzzle game is about high scoring. The score is determined by many in-game factors such as the amount of money you gain, how fast you gain your coin, how many gold coins you have, the amount of bonus chests (which is coin), a few mid-level mini-games for more points, etc.

To list out all the ways that you can increase the score would be a bit more in-depth than required for this review. Just know that, like most puzzle games, it's all about gaining the best score and practicing to utilize all situations for the highest scoring actions.

HOW COULD IT BE BETTER?

I am a big fan of manuals and installable documentation.

This game comes with a "View Readme," which covers credits, legal information, and other such text. It also comes with a link



TALISMANIA BY POPCAP GAMES (CONTINUED)

to PopCap Games' website but I was unable to find any real documentation for the game. The best documentation on the web is the *Talismania* wikipedia entry.

The game contains tips as you're playing to help you learn, but I have a bad habit of clicking "ok" and moving on. I like to read documentation before or after I play a bit – not during the game. Therefore, it would be nice to have a concrete set of rules for the game outside of the in-game tips.

The high scores are not posted on the Internet. I believe the game would contain a larger amount of challenge had the scores been competitive across the world.

Talismania is an enjoyable game for a twenty dollar bill. I would love to see this game show up on Xbox Live Marketplace in the future.

FINAL WRAPUP

Talismania is an enjoyable game for a twenty-dollar bill. I believe you will gain much more enjoyment from this game than using your USD \$19.95 to see a movie with a bag of Sour Patch Kids and a Root Beer. The game mechanics will be learned in a matter of minutes but the game can take weeks to master. There are so many small details that increase your points, coins and completion speed that you just won't learn it overnight.

Having defeated Story Mode I thought I would be done and ready to put the game down. This is not a true statement at all. Going back and attempting to build more gold structures is clawing at me and I've just barely touched Hero mode. I suggest you download the demo from PopCap Games and see for yourself. The value of \$19.95 is worthwhile. I would love to see this game show up on *Xbox Live Marketplace* in the future.

Rating: BUY



WAR ROCK – K2 NETWORK

REVIEW OF WAR ROCK PUBLIC BETA

By Edd9139

For players new to the FPS world, this modern tactical shooter's action-packed gameplay has been structured with an easy learning curve. For the expert FPS fans, variety of game-play -- from small squad level close quarters combat to medium-sized urban conflicts to huge multi-squad and vehicle operations -- provides deep gameplay. K2 Network's Free2Play™ model allows players to have full access to the game free. Fans that crave an enhanced experience can use in-game money earned during play or real world cash to access increased player abilities, special weapons and other benefits. An efficient engine allows War Rock to supply high-quality visual details and fast frame-rates without the need for the latest, most expensive computers.

– K2 Network

War Rock is a FPS PC game by K2 Network, which has just gone into public beta testing. War Rock is entirely free at the moment, although a commercial version will also be available soon. PC, FPS and FREE, need I say anymore? War Rock is currently in public beta testing before its commercial release, although it has been confirmed that the game will always remain free to play, with the option to purchase a fifth weapon slot and more weapons and features.

Why all the hype about War Rock? For me it's the fact that War Rock can be played casually and you can still be good at it. Unlike other FPS shooters where, the more you play, the more skilled you become, the more you own. In War Rock, you still become more skilled the longer you play, although it doesn't mean you'll always own newer players or players which play less.

Gameplay 9.5/10: War Rock is similar to both Counter Strike and Battlefield 2, although unique in such a way, which makes every game different. There are currently three map sizes at the moment. Mission mode maps, which are small scale maps for small arms combat on which you either have to plant or defuse bombs. K2 Network is planning to introduce more mission modes in the future. Next up is infantry combat with maps slightly larger, in which a few vehicles are added to gameplay and there are a few flags to capture. Finally, there is vehicle combat, which is large scale maps designed for vehicle and air combat, with a large number of flags to capture. Mission mode allows for up to 16 players, infantry combat maps allow for up to 24 players, while vehicle combat maps offer play for up to 32 players. Mission mode is played in rounds, where the first team to win a set number of rounds wins, while infantry and vehicle maps are both won by capturing a set number of flags.

There are five soldier classes for you to play, and you can change what class you are playing as soon as you have died. The default sidearm weapon for all classes is a Colt handgun, while the default primary weapon varies. The engineer repairs vehicles and aeroplanes, etc, although is useless in mission mode maps where there is nothing to repair. An engineer carries a sidearm gun, primary gun and spanner. The medic carries a hand gun and primary gun. The medic also has the additional bonus of 10 medic kits which they can use to either partly raise their own or a teammates health. A scout (sniper) is considered the best class by the more skilled group of players. The scout carries a secondary gun, two hand grenades and the sniping rifle, with the M24 being the default weapon for a scout. The combatant class is easily the most popular class in the game, mainly for the fact that this class can use what some would consider more powerful weapons (some weapons are restricted to certain classes). A combatant carries a sidearm gun, primary gun and two hand grenades. The fifth and final class available in War Rock is the heavy weapons unit, a player who chooses this class carries a sidearm gun, four TMA mines, and a rocket launcher, with the default being the PZF. Each class has its advantages, with the medic or combatant class being best suited for new players, while the scout or heavy weapons class is more suited to experienced players.

Better weapons can be purchased from the item shop using the in game currency Dinars. Dinars are earned whenever a match is played, and the better you did, the more Dinars you will receive. Whenever you level up a level, you receive 5000 Dinars. Weapons are leased from the item shop for 3, 7, 15 or 30 days, costing from 1200 Dinars for a Desert Eagle hand gun for three days, up to 19000 Dinars for the RPG7 for 30 days. When the time the weapon was leased for is up, the weapon is returned to the item shop. This adds greatly to gameplay and the replay value of War Rock, as to have more powerful weapons, you need more Dinars, which are largely gained by leveling up. The more you play, the harder it is to level up and the harder it becomes to earn Dinars.



WAR ROCK (CONTINUED)



More mission modes and ways to play in mission mode would certainly make gameplay on small scale maps more interesting.

Graphics 8/10: The graphics for this game are surprisingly good, although I found little difference between the low graphics settings and high graphics settings, apart from the muzzle flash on weapons. The 'rag doll' effects when dying are great, although sometimes inaccurate. For example, where a soldier breaks all their bones and is thrown across a road after being shot in the head. The graphics are crisp, although not stunning, like other FPS games. Consider that War Rock is still in beta though and has a great development team behind it...

Sounds 6/10: This is one aspect of the game which is not so developed yet. Why weapon sounds and sound effects are decent enough, the Korean voiceover's are of below average quality. Hearing 'medic' and the same voice over's repeated over and over in a round is nearly enough to make any player mad. Although voiceover's were recently updated in a patch, and may change again before the final commercial release.

Performance 8/10: The game does not need a decent computer to run. It will even run reasonably well on an old P3, all thanks to the Jindo 3D engine, which supports play on older computers. Servers for the English War Rock are currently located in West USA, East USA, England, Germany and Spain. Lag is not an issue for me, even with slower internet, although a very small minority of players report problems with lag.

Replay Value 10/10: Every game is different with every conflict being unpredictable. The simplicity of the game keeps one entertained for hours, although there's still plenty more

for experienced players. Ranking and leveling up a big factor, with there currently being 100 possible ranks, ranging from a Private Second Class to a General. To obtain better weapons, you have to play more, and the more you play, the harder it becomes to get enough Dinars for that desired weapon. To me, War Rock is a casual gamer's game, one that can just be picked up and played.

Counter Strike has always been a favourite at a LAN party, although War Rock will be soon be ready to take over. War Rock is a great game for a LAN, with gameplay easy to master for first time players, and still fun for more skilled and existing players. Although clans and clan-wars are currently disabled, they will be available for explosive action in the not too distant future.

Overall War Rock is a neat game, considering its still in beta testing and is free to play. What it lacks in graphics, it makes up for in gameplay. This is defiantly one game I will be buying when released, just to see the new 'pay to play' features K2 network come up with. Its no surprise War Rock is

often compared to as "the free Battlefield 2."

Overall 8.5/10

<http://WarRock.net/>



MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

Pentium 3, 800 MHz
512 MB RAM
Radeon 8500LE, Geforce MX400 or better
Windows ME, 2000 or XP.
800 MB Storage

RECOMMENDED SYSTEM:

Pentium 4, 2000 MHZ
512 MB RAM
FX5700 or ATI 9200
Windows 2000 or XP
800 MB Storage

WAR ROCK INTERVIEW

Q&A SESSION WITH THE PRODUCER, MATT NORTON



We were lucky enough to catch up with Matt Norton, the producer of War Rock, who was more than happy to answer our questions...

War Rock will be a free release - totally free. How do you feel you will become profitable with future releases and patches if you hand the game away for free? Why would someone purchase the commercial game over its free counterpart?

War Rock will always be free to download and Free2Play™. Even after commercial release, players will be able to play for free, and rise to the highest ranks, without ever paying us a penny.

We believe that if you enjoy the game and play it for ten, twenty, thirty hours a week (or more) that we can offer things that our players will find useful enough to pay for.

In War Rock free players play alongside the Premium players - there is no need to separate service for paying vs. non-paying players since both are equally competitive.

During the course of the game players can earn in-game money (called Dinars) as a result of their victories, and even hard-fought defeats. Players can choose to spend their Dinar on things like additional weapons, the ability to carry a wider variety of weapons onto the battlefield, healing packs, and the like.

We will be selling additional Dinars to players if they would like to get a wider variety of game-enhancements than they could afford through their battlefield exploits alone.

These packages of Dinar will include additional benefits like: the ability to create game-rooms with more customized features (game duration, game type, password restricted, etc.), first access to new maps, log-in preference on crowded servers, access to some Premium-only game-events, and an assortment of other features.

Non-premium players will still be able to join any of the games and they will be able to create games with standard preferences.

The important thing is that players will never be able to buy their way to the top ranks. No matter how much or how little a player spends, access to more advanced and specialized weapons and other gear will be restricted by character rank - with the higher ranking characters having access to the cooler military technology (much as in real-life, the more experienced troops tend to get some of the more specialized equipment).

How long was the development cycle for War Rock, and did you find any huge hurdles and challenges while designing the product?

Dream Execution, Ltd., is the South Korean-based developer of War Rock. It took over two years to create the Jindo engine underlying the War Rock game code and a year longer to create the game. War Rock has actually been in commercial release in South Korea for over a year now, with over 3-million registered users.

Dream Execution has made special effort to make the game quick moving and easy for even novice players to get involved in. An additional feature of War Rock is that the Jindo engine is extremely efficient. War Rock's minimum system requirements are only a PIII 800 MHz (or equivalent) and its recommended system spec is a PIV 2.0 GHz.

While the game is extremely successful in South Korea, Western players have slightly different priorities and expectations than Korean players do, so we've spent most of our Beta-test time fine-tuning War Rock for Western players.



Do you foresee any additional content being made available once War Rock ships a final commercial release? Will you develop a sequel or publish purchasable, downloadable content to your audience?

Our schedule for War Rock includes monthly content releases. This new content will be accessible by all players free of charge.

In addition to the normal content releases, a couple of times a year we will be releasing larger packages of updates that will include more game modes, updates on the background story, as well as new maps, weapons, and vehicles.

How do you see War Rock unique and different from other FPS?

War Rock is different in a few key ways. First, at K2 Network we see online games not so much as a product industry (where you put a box on a shelf) but rather, as a service industry. As part of that belief, we feel that the game belongs to the players not us.

Since we're already scheduled and set up to provide monthly releases of new content, it makes sense to allow the player-community to define that content by telling us what they want next.

We read the forums and respond to users, but we also actively solicit information on the game from our top players and clans. For example, we recently ran a poll so the players could tell us which weapon they wanted us to add to the game next.

I think the most important and most exciting difference for War Rock as an FPS, is that we can create a game in which the content is very player driven.

For example, some of our clans have set up races on one of the maps, using 6-wheel trucks and motorcycles. We think that's a great idea and are planning to create some race maps to support that.



WAR ROCK INTERVIEW (CONTINUED)

Other players came up with the idea to allow for Asymmetric combat. As you know, this refers to situations very much in the news today, in which you have a smaller group of well armed soldiers against a great number of opponents equipped only with AK-47s. It sounds like a great idea so we're slating it for production.

Another popular request from our players is to allow character customization. We're currently working to let players show their clan symbols as unit-patches on their character uniforms, and even to enable clans to customize their uniforms (with, say a red-beret for all of your clan members in the game).

We let the players decide the course of the game, and I think that's something very unique in online games.

Will new content released after the commercial release be exclusively for players who purchase the commercial version? If so, do you think this will cause balance issues between players who bought the game and players who play for free?

There will be no required purchase as part of the commercial release. When the game goes to commercial release that merely means that we will start allowing players to purchase some enhancements, but the framework of the game will not change.

Non-premium players will not be able to start a game with some of the new maps for the first 30-days after new assets are released. But they will be able to start normal games (with default settings) and they will be able to join games on new maps.

Other than that, all of the contents allowed by each player's rank will be available for purchase using in-game money (Dinars) regardless of whether those Dinars were earned in-game, purchased, or a combination of both.

Do you have any game designers with prior military experience working on the game design and "realism" factors in the strategy and combat tactics?

The emphasis in War Rock is on action and fun rather than realism for its own sake.

Many of War Rock's developers at Dream Execution have served in the South Korean military and we blend that with the team's FPS game-experience. The result is a good blend of the real-feel with constant fast-paced action.



Have you found your open beta to be a success? Are gamers enthusiastic about having access to a game in its early stages and feel "part" of the quality control for the product?

The Open Beta has been extremely successful for us in finding out more about what our players want as well as which areas we need to improve in. Additionally, we've been able to start establishing ties with clans and players across the US and EU.

We read and respond daily to bugs given to us on our forums, we allow our Beta players the ability to input bugs directly into our bug-tracking software via a web-interface, and we have in-game GMs.

At first, we weren't sure how useful GMs would be in a FPS game, but it turns out that's something that the players really like. Our GMs move from the lobby into the various game rooms, and are able to

answer questions, verify cheating vs. skill, and to help run in-game events.

Having GMs in-game has been so successful for us that we intend to enlarge the GM staff and make that a permanent part of War Rock's service.

I think that the Beta test time has given us a real opportunity to show our players that we listen to them, we care, and most importantly we take action on their concerns and requests. As a developer, it feels very good to be able to respond to player's wishes. I'm very excited to see where our players will take War Rock in the coming months and years ahead.

Do you consider War Rock the "World of Warcraft" of first person shooters?

In any online game the online community formed by the players is a vital element. Some large, diverse, and dynamic communities have grown up around WoW.

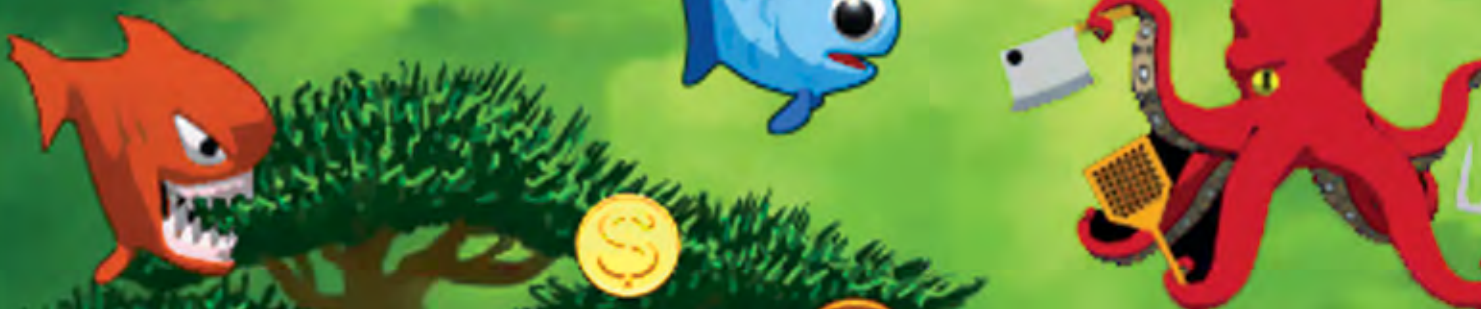
Nurturing and supporting the War Rock game community so they feel a real attachment to their game is vitally important to us. In that sense, WoW and War Rock share some common goals.

WoW is a very cohesive developer-vision of a fun game-world, and players are invited to experience that vision. Where War Rock differs is that we would like to help our community to form War Rock into their vision of the best FPS ever.

The War Rock team looks forward to doing just that.

POPCAP GAMES

Interview by CodeMonkey



PopCap Games puts pride into each game they ship. PopCap has one goal: producing fun games that every single person can enjoy. They have no limit on age and prove beyond any doubt that casual gamers exist and those gamers love to play games. For anyone that has played a PopCap game knowingly or not they have found hours of entertainment and joy from such simple designs and cheap prices. There is no doubt in my mind that PopCap Games will grow as everyone becomes drastically aware that each person has a little gamer inside themselves scratching to get out...

Your company history states that in 2002 the three founders John Vechey, Brian Fiete, and Jason Kapalka stopped working out of their house and started working in an office. This success story is interesting, can you expand on that? Were these visionaries working full time on PopCap web games? Were they living on Mac & Cheese while they struggled to make a name for themselves?

Well, without going into all the gory details, suffice it to say we were scraping by in the early days, watching the bottom fall out of the online advertising market and asking ourselves "how can we make a living with games that people have always been able to play for free if at this point advertisers won't take a chance on the Web and foot the bill for this user experience?" We decide to try selling a somewhat enhanced version of Bejeweled, then known as Diamond Mine. No one else in the industry thought this was a good idea, and they had history on their side; how do you get consumers to PAY for something that they've traditionally gotten for free and can still get 80% of for free online? But we really didn't have much choice if we wanted to stay in the casual games space so we said "what the hell, let's give it a shot." Brian built a little app that produced a "cha-ching!" cash register sound each time someone actually uploaded their credit card info and purchased the game. At first it was really cool hearing that "cha-ching" every hour or so... when it started going off every 15 minutes, we thought "maybe we're on to something here." Then when it got to be every two minutes, every minute, etc., we turned the damned thing off 'cause it was driving us nuts! Yes, we were at that point working on PopCap titles full-time and yes, some quantities of Mac & Cheese were consumed in those days... now we can afford Mac & Cheese AND the occasional bottle of water – life is good!



What is the PopCap office like? Do people wear T-Shirts and Shorts or business casual?

PopCap's offices are for the most part pretty informal in most respects. We do insist that employees wear clothes, but beyond that we're not too picky. Name-calling, pulling hair and putting tacks on the CEO's chair are frowned upon. The company's headquarters in Seattle are located downtown in a spiffy high-rise, and our conference rooms overlook the Space Needle and much of the rest of the city. The office is a semi-circular space with lots of cubicles centered around a spacious inner room that is set up like someone's dream "rec room," with a big-screen TV and various video game consoles, as well as couches, bean bag chairs, foosball table, and several arcade cabinets equipped with virtually every video game from the late '70s to the '90s.

You started with all web based games, and have moved into packaged downloadable games. You even have some of them on Xbox Live Arcade now. What made you decide that full blown "deluxe" download games were the next progressive step?

We were more or less 'forced' to come up with the "try-before-you-buy" deluxe game downloadable sales model when the bottom fell out of the Web advertising business in 2000-2001. We couldn't survive on

the meager ad revenues available via people playing our games free online, so we thought 'maybe people will PAY for a deluxe version of a game like Bejeweled, with better graphics, more levels, and some bells and whistles. Brian Fiete built a little app that made a 'cha-ching' cash register sound every time someone entered their credit card number and bought one of our games... it was very cool to hear that sound, at first every hour or two, then every 30, 20 minutes. When the 'cha-ching' began sounding every minute or so, we turned it off 'cause it got annoying. But that's when we knew we were on to something!

Our games are now also sold at retail outlets like Wal-Mart, Target, BestBuy, etc. as shrink-wrapped boxed editions, as well as via Web download (still the bulk of our sales). Many of our top games are also available on mobile phones and PDAs, in-flight on several airlines, in-demand TV in thousands of hotels, and on video game consoles. Heck, there are even scratch-off lottery tickets sporting the Bejeweled, Chuzzle, Bookworm and other PopCap game brands!



POPCAP GAMES (CONTINUED)

PopCap's flagship game, *Bejeweled*, was an instant success. What was it about this game that was popular to so many people?

We're still not sure, after selling 5 million copies on the Web and seeing *Bejeweled* installed on 50 million cell phones in N. America alone over the past couple of years! Essentially, it boils down to simple yet challenging and rewarding game play, solid graphics and a fundamentally fun core activity: matching three like objects through specific controls/movements, with some interesting obstacles and bonuses appearing over time. We knew this game was pretty good when we sat a couple of our moms down to play the prototype and they were still playing an hour later when we came back! We never anticipated it would become the biggest casual game in the 21st century so far!

What is your most popular game to date? I've heard a great deal about *Bejeweled 2*.

Well, *Bejeweled* and *Bejeweled 2* are our 'flagship franchise' title and our most popular game(s) so far. But others like *Zuma*, *Bookworm* and *Chuzzle* have been huge hits too. The *Bejeweled* 'franchise' – *Bejeweled* and its successor *Bejeweled 2* – have collectively sold well over 5 million units and the mobile version of the game has been installed on more than 50 million cell phones in N. America alone over the past couple of years. We estimate that the *Bejeweled* franchise has consumed roughly 2 billion hours of consumers' leisure time since 2001 – not bad for a game you can learn in about 30 seconds! Add to this Computer Gaming World Magazine's induction of *Bejeweled* into its Hall of Fame last year – the first puzzle game to be inducted since *Tetris* 19 years ago – and we're pretty proud of that one!

Your site says that PopCap has 66 employees. Are all these folks working on arcade games? How many games do you work on simultaneously?

Actually, PopCap now has 75 employees, most of them situated here in Seattle but some in our new San Francisco studio and our recently opened international offices in Dublin Ireland... who's responsible for updating the damned website? Oh, wait – I am! Well, we'll get that figure updated shortly. Not all of these people work on building games, of course – someone has to sweep the helicopter pad and feed the monitor lizard. Roughly



two thirds of our workers are involved in some aspect of game design/development, with the rest handling marketing, sales, and other areas. We generally have half a dozen or more games in the pipeline at any given time, and try to publish at least four or five each year – although those numbers continue to grow as we expand our operations and increase our workforce.

Does PopCap work a standard set of hours or do the developers tend to work late into the night?

We don't have standard hours, a dress code or many of the other trappings of "real" corporations. Heck, we left the corporate world to avoid that stuff! On the other hand we do work hard and sometimes the artists and coders burn the midnight oil – but not because they're "on deadline" – we have no deadlines, really, we just ship a game when it's ready. This philosophy has served us well so far and we have no plans to change it. It really doesn't make sense to drive employees toward some made-up finish line, only to have the game be less than it can be and the employees be burned

out. Maybe if you're a public company you have to do some of that stuff to keep the shareholders happy and meet quarterly financial goals, but we plan to avoid this mentality like the plague for as long as we possible can – hopefully forever!

You develop games internally, but have also published a few games for other developers. What criteria do you have for publishing external games?

We look for games with great fundamental gameplay – just as we do with our internally-developed games. We certainly help "polish" 3rd-party titles when necessary, but basically it's all about the core game and how much fun it is, how novel and different it is, and whether it's complimentary to our existing lineup of games.

PopCap encourages independent game developers including handing out your own developer framework to others. How do you see independent game developers fitting into the gaming market? It seems that all big companies started out as small independent companies with a dream.



POPCAP GAMES (CONTINUED)

We still think of ourselves as indie game developers, and some of the brain cells from our early days are still functional, so we can relate to the small indie team working in an attic apartment or as a virtual team spread across the country or the world. The indie developers are key to keep the casual games sector vibrant and innovative; they're the ones who really have the ability – and often, the desperation – to think way outside the box and come up with something very different. They have no one lurking over their shoulder saying “that’s interesting but unproven; let’s go with something more conservative but a bit more tried and true that will definitely earn a return on the investment.” So indie developers are still very much the lifeblood of this part of the games business in our opinion and we want to help support them wherever possible.

Based on your customer breakdown you have a 72% female gamer base. What do you think draws female gamers to your games?

We honestly don’t have a definitive answer here. Our assumption is that women like to play games, including ‘videogames,’ as much as men. It’s just that traditionally, videogames have been made with the young male audience in mind. This dates back to the days of big arcades and the first console systems. (Although the VERY earliest arcade hits, like PONG, Donkey Kong, Centipede, Pac-Man etc. had very broad appeal.) Women were never really a clear target for computer game developers and when those developers DID try to make a ‘game for girls’ it was generally panned by critics and consumers alike – no one likes to be pandered to... But if you build games with truly broad appeal, women will play them, and since we at PopCap strive to make games with the broadest possible appeal, it makes sense that women would gravitate toward these games. Further, since the majority of computer/videogames still target young male consumers, casual games like ours are in some ways ‘the only game(s) in town’ for female consumers. I don’t think we’ll ever try to make a game specifically for women, though – not only is that difficult to do, it’s never really worked in the past and it’s not really necessary. Just make solid, high-quality games with everyone as your target audience, and women will definitely be a big part of the customer base.

Essentially, [Bejeweled’s popularity] boils down to simple yet challenging and rewarding game play, solid graphics and a fundamentally fun core activity: matching three like objects through specific controls/movements, with some interesting obstacles and bonuses appearing over time.

90% of your customers are over the age of twenty-five. What do you think draws the 25 and older crowd to your games? Is it the simplicity, the retro arcade-feel, or do older gamers just like to have fun?



Good question. Basically, when you make games that don’t focus on violence and don’t have the goal of getting your adrenaline pumping like you’ve just run a 5k race, you end up with games that appeal to the human brain at a fundamental level. And that in turn makes them appealing to just about everyone. Furthermore, because the casual games we make lend themselves to short sessions of playing and don’t require you to read a 50-page manual before you can start playing, adults tend to gravitate to our games. Some play the games as a form of ‘mental break’ – playing for 15 minutes at their desk during lunch; some play for social reasons (competing with friends to get the highest score in Bookworm or Bejeweled 2, etc.). Others play for the sheer fun of it, and games that can be started and stopped at any time lend themselves to the smaller periods of time in which adults can still have fun...how often does the average adult really have an opportunity to play a game for three hours? Having said all that, we DO have many fans in the under-25 crowd... games like Insaniquarium, Feeding Frenzy, Heavy Weapon, etc. have strong followings of younger players.

You’re site allows gamers to try before they buy. Every game has this nice feature; do you know how many gamers try your demo’s before they buy it? I almost cried in the middle of Bookworm when it shutdown because I played for my hour demo – it was just that addictive. Luckily, once I had a registered copy it remembered where I let off.

Well, we know that more than 175 million copies of the deluxe versions of our games have been downloaded in the past six years. And while the percentage of those downloads that turn into actual sales is relatively small, our games are also available at retail, so many people who try the deluxe downloads end up purchasing at stores



POPCAP GAMES (CONTINUED)

like Costco, Target, etc. This 'try-before-you-buy' sales model is great because it means that we have virtually NO dissatisfied customers – if you're able to play a game in all its deluxe glory for an hour (usually after playing the free basic version for awhile on the Web first), you have a far better idea how much that game really appeals to you than if you're purchasing a typical 'hardcore' game at a store based on the packaging, and ad or two, and maybe a review. And let's face it, we HAVE to give people a 'taste' of the games before expecting them to buy – we don't have the huge marketing budgets, over-the-top graphics and animations, and movie/TV show/comic book tie-ins that help sell 'hardcore' games.

You categorize your games into Puzzle Games, Arcade games, Word Games, and Card Games. Which category has been the most successful?

The puzzle game genre has been most successful for Popcap so far, but that's partly because we've made more puzzle games than other kinds. We also strive to break down those category 'barriers' in new games, because let's face it, you can only play so many 'match-three' games before that particular type of game becomes old hat. (That said, we also work hard to 'extend' existing gameplay models with all sorts of twists and tweaks, and you'll see that reflected in some future games.) We've got some games in the pipeline right now that definitely can't be comfortably put into any of the categories you cite above – what are they? We dunno – but they're fun as hell and totally addictive and we expect them to help push the boundaries of so-called 'casual games' in new directions.

Let's talk about Zuma for a second. This game is massively addicting and seems to be successful on Xbox 360 Marketplace. It's available on mobile phones too? What type of phone do I need to play Zuma mobile?



It might be easier to list the phones that Zuma is NOT available for. Thanks to our partnerships with Glu, Jamdat, Astraware and other mobile content providers, Zuma is literally available for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of different phones, not to mention PocketPCs and PDAs. Phones that are more than a couple of years old may not support the game, but beyond that just about any phone can play the game. And like Bejeweled, Zuma is pretty ideal for mobile play in almost every respect: you can play it for 5 minutes or an hour, depending on how much time you have while waiting at the airport, in line at the grocery store, at the dentist's office, etc.; the controls and rules are straightforward enough that you can be enjoying it within a minute of downloading it; the graphics/UI is simple enough that a large screen is not necessary; and the broad appeal of the games combined with the fact that just about everyone has a mobile phone has resulted in these games being big hits on the mobile platform.

Zuma can get extremely difficult in the later levels; do you have any PopCap employees that have defeated this game? It seems to take many hours to do so.

Yes, part of the challenge with Zuma is that when you fail to complete the last round of a given level, you must start that whole level over... this does cause some frustration for some players, but it also means the game provides a challenge for a longer period of time for most people. Sure, many of our employees have finished the game, but they had to work overtime to do it. And we've certainly heard from some customers who've completed the whole game – though some of them had to cheat to do it! Naughty, naughty...!



Are any other PopCap games planned for the Xbox Live Marketplace?

Oh, definitely. The success of our initial offerings for Xbox Live Arcade (Bejeweled 2, Zuma, Feeding Frenzy and Astropop) has encouraged us to port more games to that platform. A very cool version of Heavy Weapon, complete with all-new multiplayer modes, is in development right now and will ship later this year. We can't disclose any other plans at the moment but it's safe to say that we 'get' the Xbox and look forward to seeing more PopCap games on that platform in future.

How do you guys spread the word of PopCap games? You publish your own products and I've not seen PopCap on shelves at EB or BestBuy.

Well look harder, dammit! Half a dozen of our biggest hits are available as shrink-wrapped, boxed editions at BestBuy, Costco, Target, Wal-Mart, CompUSA and other retail chains. If your local retailer doesn't carry them, complain to the manager (but for god's sake don't tell them we told you to!) *The boxed edition of Chuzzle even comes with a plush Chuzzle doll :) As for how we spread the word, that's done through positive press and reviews, as well as tons of word-of-mouth. When one soccer mom sees another having fun on her laptop or mobile phone, they want to know what it is that's taking the player to such an enjoyable mental place while everyone else is twiddling their thumbs. So the 'pass-along' phenomenon is definitely a big part of our success, and we have many stories of people getting their bosses, their spouses, their psychiatrists or even their entire families hooked on our games.

POPCAP GAMES (CONTINUED)

It seems that many retail outlets only cater to large publishers like Electronic Arts, Activision, UbiSoft, Sega, and other popular companies. Is there no shelf room for Independent game companies or do Indies just not have the cash to produce boxed games?

This has been true historically but is changing. As retailers wake up to the fact that nearly *everyone* who comes into a Wal-Mart is a potential buyer of a broadly appealing computer/videogame, they will increasingly stock games like ours. That, and the fact that casual games sell for less than half of the typical hard-core game makes casual games a great 'impulse buy' that retailers love. It's already happening, and will happen more in future!

Console makers are now aware that their original audience is aging and they need to find ways to reach a broader audience, including older gamers and women.

PopCap recognizes the "casual gamer," but how do you define the habits of a casual gamer?

We're actually conducting a survey next month to attempt to define some of this. Basically, a typical casual gamer is a 40-something woman seeking a form of leisure-time entertainment that's more engaging than TV, more fun than reading a newspaper, and can be available when the mood strikes for 15 minutes of fun. As to exactly how customers view the playing of our games versus other activities in their lives, that will hopefully be among the answers we glean from the survey – stay tuned!



HEAVY WEAPON

There are many people out there that would be great "casual gamers" but have not found their games yet. Is there any good strategy to get new people involved in gaming so that they too can enjoy gaming casually?

Well, our strategy is to try to raise awareness of casual games in general – through stories in newspapers, magazines, on TV and radio, and of course on the Web. We haven't done much advertising in the past, but are starting to do more, and that will also make more people aware of the games. Combine that with the fact that people LIKE to share their discovery of casual games with others, and we're starting to see a real

groundswell of consumers playing casual games. Depending on which research numbers you believe, there are now between 150 million and 300 million people playing casual games on a regular basis – not bad for a 'little-known leisure-time activity'

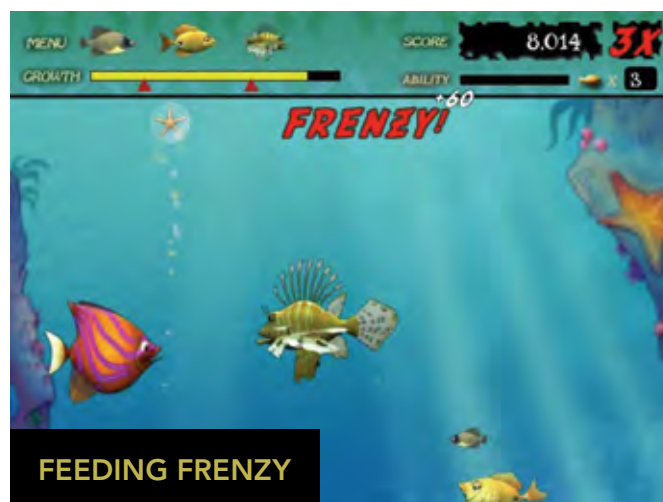


INSANIQUELIUM

I am sure you have heard of the Wii and how they are targeting new gamers and creating a more casual gaming environment. What are your thoughts on their goal to bring in new gamers? Do you see this as a successful maneuver or should console companies just focus on the die hard gamers?

Console makers are now aware that their original audience is aging and they need to find ways to reach a broader audience, including older gamers and women. There's no reason why these other parts of the overall consumer base couldn't be enticed to purchase a videogame console – if the right games were presented to them. Whether those 'casual gamers' can eventually be "upsold" to more hardcore titles remains to be seen, but even if they can't, this broader audience is so much bigger than the 12-28 year old male consumer base that you can make money this way even if it's \$5 or \$10 at a time. **Many gamers would love to say "I build games for a living" - Do you have any inspiring thoughts for gamers that want to move into the game development industry?**

Well, it's simplistic and somewhat hackneyed, but the key is "do what you love." We've seen a fair number of artists and developers from the hardcore side of the business migrate to the casual games space with an attitude of "well, this isn't my cup of tea, but it's where the money is at the moment, so what the hell." That's no way to make a living – or have a life! To make great casual games you need to play and enjoy them, otherwise you're just guessing at what people will like or mimicking what's already out there – and that's no fun and not the way to be successful, ultimately.



FEEDING FRENZY



J011YR0GER

2OLD2PLAY.COM COMMUNITY MEMBER SHOWCASE

Real Name: Jimmy, Jim or Jimbo

Gamer Tag: J011yR0ger (Leet spelling)

Location: Atlanta, GA.

Age: 32

Status: Married

Children: 3

Occupation: Help Desk



**JOLLYROGER, WIFE AND KIDS
JIMMY IV AND IAN-THOMAS**

FAVORITE DRINK:

Sweet Tea not that unsweetened garbage you geographically misplaced people drink.

FAVORITE FOOD:

Mexican (Food or people)

FAVORITE MUSIC GROUP:

Metallica

FAVORITE TV SERIES:

Don't really have one. Old cartoons (60's, 70's & 80's)

FAVORITE MOVIE:

Pirates of the Caribbean

FAVORITE SOLO ARTIST THAT YOU WOULD ALMOST BE EMBARRASSED TO SAY YOU ENJOY HEARING:

Barry Manilow, c'mon folks he writes the songs....

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO 2OLD- 2PLAY AS A MEMBER?

Well, I had posted a message on Bungie.net back at the end of April 2005, talking about how much I hated the snot-nosed brats (pre-Timmy label) I would game with in MM. I believe it was MikeJames that replied, letting me know that there was a place I could game with people more my age and not have to worry about the little ones bothering me. Been a member since May 4th, 2005. w00t!!

IF YOU WON FIVE MILLION DOLLARS WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH IT?

First invest, then spend.

WHAT VIDEO GAME DO YOU FIND YOURSELF PLAYING THE MOST?

It was COD2, but the 2old2con LAN party in Chicago and lure of Halo 2 has drawn me back.

WILL YOU BE BUYING A WII, PLAYSTATION 3, BOTH OR NONE?

Maybe a Wii. Honestly, I would like to get a DS Lite, especially for the new SMB game.

WHAT VIDEO GAME CHARACTER DO YOU THINK BEST PORTRAYS YOURSELF?

Duke Nukem. I could care less who, or what, it is. If it moves, it's gonna die and I shall feel no remorse for it.

ARE THERE ANY GAMES THAT YOU PLAY THAT ARE NOT PART OF THE FIRST-PERSON-SHOOTER GENRE?

Ummmm..... no. Does Blazing Angels count? It's third person. I will say this for the entire community; I am ashamed that I have NEVER played an RPG. There I said it. LOL



IAN-THOMAS AND MEGAN

WHAT VIDEO GAME DEVELOPER/DESIGNER DO YOU BELIEVE HAS MADE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE GAMING MARKET?

Easy answer for me personally... Bungie. I had no desire what-so-ever to get a next generation console. After being given an Xbox and Halo, I haven't looked back.

WHERE DID THE NICK NAME "JOLLYROGER" COME FROM?

Ok, this is a long story. It has nothing to do with pirates. I am a huge history nut, especially WWII. First up, my Halo avatar. The emblem matches the tattoo I have on my right arm. It is what my grandpa's patch looked like. He was a nosegunner in a B-24 bomber, named Big Chief (pilot was an American Indian and his name: Leaford Bearskin he is now Chief of the Wyandot tribe in OK), in the Pacific in WWII. He was part of the 5th Air Force, 321st Bomb Squadron, 90th Bomb Group called the Jolly Rogers. A lot of thought and preparation went into getting it because I wanted it to be special. He is my hero and has some awesome war stories. THAT is where JollyRoger came from, not some cool pirate story.

YOU ATTENDED THE 2OLD2CON EVENT LAST MONTH, ANY THOUGHTS?

It totally rocked. Thanks goes out to OldManRiver48 for hooking me up. It was just a great time to hang out with people I have gamed with for over a year, finally putting faces with the voices. Cool family to be a part of. All around it was most excellent. Looking forward to next year.

IS THERE ANY OLD-SCHOOL GAMES THAT YOU WOULD LOVE TO SEE REMADE WITH TODAY'S GRAPHICS, SOUND AND HORSE POWER?

Contra (Non-XBLA), Duke Nukem - you gotta have Duke on the 360.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE SUPPORT THAT THE 2OLD2PLAY SITE HAS GIVEN YOU AND YOUR FAMILY OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS?

Wow, where to start here. When I first started posting about my daughter, Megan, I honestly did not expect the response that I received. It was truly overwhelming. People I had never heard of, or even gamed with sent me PM's with their well wishes. Phone calls from XSSmoke, Rashanii and Teufelhunden were wonderful to get, while in the hospital. The site really showed out during that time and actually still does today. I constantly get message in chat, or on the site asking how Megan is doing. For that, the site and its people will always have a place in my heart and will always have my respect.

HAS IT INSPIRED YOU OR CHANGED YOUR PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE?

In one word, yes.

IF YOU HAD TO GIVE A YOUNGER KID SOME ADVICE ABOUT GAMING AND ONLINE PLAY, WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM?

Watch what you say. Think before you speak. And always remember, there is ALWAYS someone better than you.





JO 11 y ROger


STUDIOKM.COM

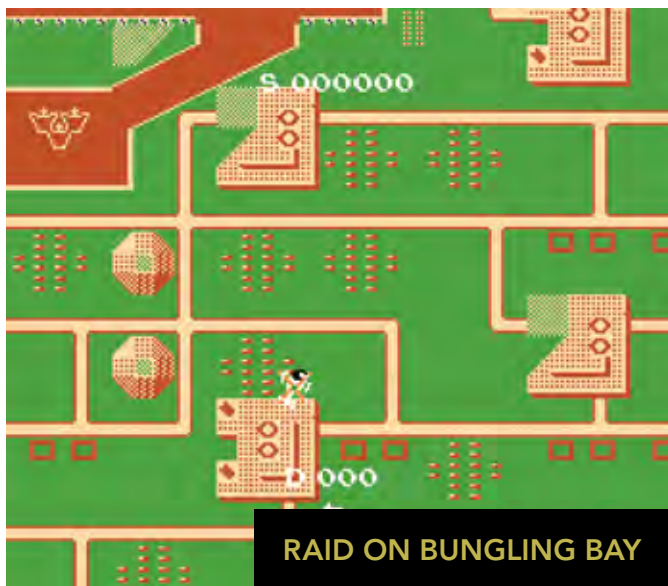
WILL WRIGHT: PIONEER

A LOOK AT THE GAME DESIGNER HIMSELF

By Edd9139

Will Wright is a pioneer in gaming and the gaming industry for the past 20 years. Wright was born in 1960 in Atlanta, Georgia, and graduated from high school at the age of 16. After high school, Wright continued to further his education at Louisiana State University, Louisiana Tech, and New School University, where for five years he studied architecture, mechanical engineering, and aviation. What did this future pioneer get after five years at three institutions of higher learning? No degree, although five years of experience which would be crucial later.

At age 20, Wright became heavily involved in gaming and became addicted to computer games. Later that year, he taught himself how to program on his Apple II. In 1984, the then unknown Will Wright released his first game, *Raid On Bungeling Bay*, published by Broderbund for the Commodore 64. *Raid On Bungeling Bay* was a scrolling shooting game. While developing *Raid On Bungeling Bay*, Wright discovered placing roads and populating the map using his building utility for the game was fun in itself.



Hence, Wright began to expand on his roads and buildings utility and transformed it into a unique game of its own. *Sim City*, as it would become known, was an entirely unique simulation game unlike no game before it. After developing the game solely for a year, Wright started to look for a publisher. No publisher would accept the game due to its unheard of and unproven concept -- a decision some still likely regret today. Even Broderbund didn't want Wright's latest game and believed that "without clear winners and losers, the idea would be a commercial flop." With no publisher, the game was left unreleased for four years. Finally, Wright created *Sim City* on the Commodore 64 in 1985 on his own without a publisher. With no publisher, the game was left unfinished for years., but sold only a few copies. However, all would soon realize Broderbund could not have been further from the truth with *Sim City*.

In 1987, Wright was, still unable to find a publisher for *Sim City* and, teamed up with Jeff Braun, a businessman who wanted to enter the gaming market. Together they formed Maxis; Wright and their small team of developers started to work on improving *Sim City*, readying it for release. Finally, in 1989, the idea with which Wright had been spinning in his head and slowly making

headway on since 1984 was released. *Sim City* became a best-seller video game by the end of the year, and was even distributed to over 5,000 public schools to teach children about the infrastructure of cities.

Wright soon began co-designing *Sim Earth: The Living Planet* with Fred Haslem. The game was released through Maxis in 1990 and at the time was considered to have unlimited potential, although sales were not as high as that of *Sim City*. At this stage of his career, Wright was also working on a new game with Justin McCormick, *Sim Ant: The Electronic Ant Colony*. It was released shortly after *Sim Earth* in 1991. It never gained much popularity at that time, but is considered today to be one of Will Wright's best games to date by game critics.

Sim Life, released by Maxis in 1992, was the next major game to add to Wright's resume. The game was often referred to as "The Genetic Playground," in which players had the ability to modify the genetics and DNA of species in order to alter the outcome of the planet. *Sim Life* was certainly ahead of its time and never really got the praise it deserved.

A Train, a train simulation by Japanese company Artdink, was released by Maxis in the USA in 1993. Also out in 1993 was *SimFarm*, which you either loved or loathed. There is only one word capable of describing *Sim Farm*: "Classic."

Ever since *Raid On Bungeling Bay* and then *Sim City*, Wright had been fascinated by architecture and the construction of dwellings. His latest project at that time had the working titles of *Dollhouse* and *Home Tactics: The Experimental Domestic Simulator*. It was 1993 when Wright started to become serious about an architecture simulation and developed a playable game. Although being the pioneer Wright has always been, he decided to take the game one step further. The aim of the game was to create an architecturally good house however; he had no way to score players. That is where little 'sims' entered the architecture game. The characters would live in the house and evaluate the quality of the dwelling. This small addition changed the game and Will Wright's career drastically.



WILL WRIGHT: PIONEER (CONTINUED)



Wright began developing small sims to live in the game, and in doing so, created interactions for the sims, such as having a shower or cooking a meal. Gradually, the focal point of the game shifted from an architecture and building sim to a full blown life simulator. Interestingly enough, Maxis executives failed to see Wright's vision and the project was shelved.

With a *Sim City* sequel desired by many and Wright wanting no part of it, Fred Haslem set to work on *Sim City 2000*, when Wright wanted no part of it. However good a designer Fred Haslem was, it was decided during development that the game wasn't working out. That is when Wright was called back in and spent the next year working on *Sim City 2000*. *Sim City 2000* was released in Q1, 1994.

Maxis had great success with *Sim City* and its spin-off *Sim City 2000* but unfortunately, they were quickly losing money and slowly coming to face the inevitable. Maxis executives wished for Wright and his team to produce four games by the end of 1996, a feat which many considered impossible including Wright. Wright was then working on his latest sim, *SimCopter*, where you would pilot various helicopters and complete rescue missions, etc. By the end of 1996, Maxis did manage to rush out *SimCopter*, *SimPark*, *Full Tilt Pinball*, and *Sim Tunes*. Although Wright and his team met the deadlines, he was not a very happy game developer; "To start off with, I didn't even have the resources I needed to do *SimCopter*!" The company had spread what limited resources they had across the four "must-launch" games. *SimCopter* was a popular game that season even though it was riddled with bugs and did not enthrall many players.

After pressure from Maxis executives to rush out yet another sequel, Wright and his team of developers immediately started to work on another *Sim City* iteration, *Sim City 3000*. Wright spent the next year working on *Sim City 3000*, although he was unhappy with it, and quoted, “my stress level was increasing exponentially.”

Maxis reported losses of \$1.7 million in 1996, and in 1997 was acquired by EA Games for \$125 million. EA Games moved Luc Barthalet to Maxis with the task of turning the company around. After seeing *Sim City 3000*, he was shocked and quickly brought in another EA designer, Lucy Bradshaw (who still works with Will Wright today) to help improve the game. Bradshaw decided to strip the game back to *Sim City 2000*'s roots and expand on that, obliterating the 3D aspect Maxis executives had previously

been pushing. *Sim City 3000* was released in Q1, 1999 after Bradshaw had been assisting the development of the game for more than a year.


While Bradshaw was working on *Sim City 3000*, Wright was still busy at work working with a single programmer, Jamie Doornbos, on creating the engine on which *Dollhouse* (later renamed to *The Sims*) was based. By 1998, the team working on *Dollhouse* had grown to about 12 programmers and graphic artists. Finally, EA Games saw Wright's vision of the game, and Wright had a full team and all the resources he needed. *The Sims* was already highly anticipated when it was released in February, 2000. With many *Sim City* fans eager to get their hands on Wright's latest creative game, *The Sims* went on to become one of the best selling PC games ever.

After *The Sims* release, the community following grew quickly and the Sims team expanded to nearly 400 staff. Wright began work on an expansion pack for *The Sims* titled *The Sims: Livin' Large*. He slowly had less involvement in expansion packs for *The Sims* and began work on *The Sims Online* making it playable online with other players.

In 2001, Will Wright was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Game Developers Choice Awards. After a year-and-a-half, *The Sims Online* was released and regrettably failed to be as successful as *The Sims* franchise. In total, seven expansion packs were released for *The Sims*. Wright only had a large involvement in *Livein' Large*. He advised on *The Sims: House Party*, *Hot Date*, *Vacation*, *Unleashed*, *Superstar* and *Makin' Magic* expansion packs.

The Sims had been a huge success for Maxis/EA games, and Wright was eager to do a sequel to *The Sims*, and in September, 2004, *The Sims 2* was released on PC, although this time, Wright and Lucy Bradshaw (who is still with *The Sims 2* today) had a team of nearly 400 programmers, animators, texture artists, meshers, songwriters and testers. *The Sims 2* was another huge success, and like *The Sims*, it is sure to have a long life ahead of it. *The Sims 2: University*, *Nightlife* and *Open For Business* expansion packs have already been released, although without Wright's direct involvement.

What could Wright be working on which is more of a challenge than *The Sims* series? The game which has been quoted as superior to *The Sims* series: *Spore*. *Spore* will give the player the ability to simulate life which evolves over time from microscopic cells to sentient beings capable of creating their own society with every game vastly different. It's expected the work of the genius will be released in the second half of 2007.


 A small image of the Spore PC CD-ROM cover, showing a group of diverse, stylized characters in a crowd, with a 'PC CD-ROM' label in the top left corner.

Will Wright is not only a pioneer but also an inspiration. From University dropout to one of the greatest game designers in the industry, everyone can learn from Will Wright. Everyone young or old can grasp the wise words of Wright, "I think by exploring the bad side you're really just mapping the envelope of the system... you're getting a sense of how far off you can go."



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RICHARD GARRIOTT

THE STORY OF A LEGEND IN THE GAME INDUSTRY

By Tank 2old2play

There are few people in the game industry who have been around as long as or had the same impact as Richard Garriott, aka Lord British. Through his revolutionary games, he has gained fame and fortune that other developers can only dream of.

That fortune has allowed him to have many eccentric hobbies and collectables. For example, he owns the very first moon buggy and has taken trips to Antarctica. Perhaps his biggest eccentric possession is a throwback to his alter ego Lord British. In the late 90s, he bought a 25,000 sq ft. estate on top of a hill and built his own castle complete with moat, underground passages and a dungeon.

His Lord British alter ego has its roots in the cruel high school days where kids made fun of you and came up with ridiculous nicknames. Kids thought he had a British accent, so the kids started calling him Lord British. Although he was born in Cambridge, England, he was raised in League City, Texas.

Back in 1979 when Garriott was 19, he started working on his now-famous game called *Alkabeth*. It was a pet project he worked on during the summer after Senior year of High School. He was an employee of ComputerLand at the time and the owner of his store convinced him to publish the game himself. So Richard went out and bought 200 zip-lock bags and had 200 cover sheets and 200 manuals printed up. At the time though, floppy disks were so expensive he only made 16 disks to start with and he sold 15 of them. One of those 15 discs found its way to California Pacific who purchased the rights to *Alkabeth* and published it, selling 30,000 units.

Happy with the *Alkabeth* success, Garriott went to work on a follow up game called *Ultima I*. This game shared the dungeon code from *Alkabeth* and had bit mapped graphics for the outdoor environment. This was published in 1980.

The *Ultima* series was gaining a lot of attention, enough that Sierra was interested in publishing the next installment. Therefore, in 1982 Sierra published *Ultima 2*. The partnership wasn't a good one for Garriott though. He ended it and founded Origin Systems with his brother Robert in Austin, Texas. A year later, Origin Systems published its first game, *Ultima III*.

The first three *Ultima* games were building blocks for Garriott. He was teaching himself how to program and testing out what did and didn't work in a game. These first three releases were a mix of fantasy, sci-fi and whatever else was 'hot' during the time period. For example: the time travel focus of *Ultima III* was influenced by the hit *Time Bandits* movie. So, after the launch of *Ultima III*, Garriott wanted to re-invent *Ultima* and what an RPG could be as he began work on *Ultima IV*.

In 1985, *Ultima IV* introduced the now legendary Avatar character and the eight virtues. This was the game that broke the RPG mold and introduced things that would be copied in RPGs to this day. This game also had a full feature NPC conversation engine for character interaction. Garriott wanted the NPCs to be as life-like as possible; this would continue to evolve as future games developed. This was the first RPG to break the typical "build your stats up to beat the main guy" model. In this game your goal was to become the Avatar through following and practicing the eight virtues. Your bad actions that didn't matter in other RPG's would have consequences in *Ultima IV*. The game also kept traditional RPG elements such as dungeon crawling, monsters to kill, in-depth story lines and a core quest to complete to finish the game. These are themes that would carry through all of the subsequent *Ultima* games.

Brittania, now with a cohesive society with morals and a role model hero would now focus on struggles of the land to live up to and manipulate the virtues. *Ultima V* showed how the virtues could be corrupted by an unscrupulous ruler in an inflexible society. *Ultima VI*

showcased prejudice brought on by not understanding other cultures. By *Ultima VII*, the society that made up Brittania had taken up a life of its own as NPCs struggled to balance the virtues with their goals and own vulnerabilities. *Ultima VII* was the last *Ultima* game published by Origin Systems as an independent entity.

In 1992, Richard Garriott sold Origin Systems to Electronic Arts. EA invests in companies to help increase the level of creativity in games released under its brand. Richard Garriott still remained on board Origin Systems, creating his vision of what RPG's should be. *Ultima VIII*, the first *Ultima*

title published under EA's influence, was a mess. It was more action oriented than RPG, was full of bugs and became known by its fans as 'jump and run' *Ultima*.

As realistic as Garriott had taken Brittania's NPC's, they still weren't real people, they were just conditional programming. So Origin began working on Brittania to be inhabited by real people and in 1997 Origin created the modern day MMORPG by releasing *Ultima Online* into the



RICHARD GARRIOTT (CONTINUED)



wild. Since *Ultima Online* was a new breed of game, again Garriott was learning through doing. The original beta test of *UO* ran on one server which very quickly crashed when 50,000 beta testers tried to log on and play. While this showed how badly they calculated demand and load, it did justify that the online RPG idea had a lot of interest to the *Ultima* fans. With EA breathing down their necks and watching everything through a magnifying glass, the talented people at Origin Systems fixed *UO* post-release and grew it into a huge success.

With the problems of *Ultima Online*'s initial release and a very long development cycle of *Ultima: Ascension*, the relationship between Garriott and EA became strained. The last chapter in the *Ultima* series, *Ultima: Ascension* was forced out the door by EA way before it was ready -- much to the dismay of the loyal fan base that had eagerly been waiting for five years. The game was full of problems and bugs. This was the last straw for Garriott, who left Origin Systems/EA in 2000 along with his brother.

During his one year non-compete contract, Garriott and his brother started brainstorming about opening their own game company again. EA, also watching the calendar, laid off almost everyone at Origin systems one year and one day after Garriott's departure. All of Origin's projects were cancelled and the company was moved out of Texas. The only Origin game left standing was *Ultima Online*, which to this day is still EA's best selling MMORPG. In April 2001, Garriott made a return to the industry when he and his brother formed Destination Games. Their initial investment of \$2,000,000 to start Destination Games was to see them through the first couple years of startup. However when EA laid off all talent Garriott had initially put there, he wanted to hire them all back for Destination Games. The Garriott brothers quickly decided they needed to accelerate their plans to bring in money.

This is where NCSOFT entered the picture. NCSOFT (a Korean company) released a MMORPG called *Lineage* not too long after *UO*. The game had four million subscribers, mostly in Asia. In contrast, *UO* and *EverQuest* had 220,000, and 400,000 subscribers, respectively. Here in the US no one had heard of NCSOFT nor the hugely successful *Lineage* MMORPG. NCSOFT had been trying to get US gaming magazines to review *Lineage* but there was no interest. So, having heard about the Origin/EA Richard Garriott split and their new Destination Games startup, NCSOFT gave Garriott a

call. Through discussions they found each of their companies to be a compliment to the other and their overall vision was the same. Destination Games needed outside funding and an equal partner. NCSOFT needed USA exposure and talented MMO developers it couldn't get on its own. The two companies joined, and Destination Games became NCSOFT Austin. Richard Garriott currently serves as Executive Producer for NCSOFT Austin.

A lesser known part of Richard Garriott's life is his role as Vice Chairman of Space Adventures, a space tourism agency. Garriott's father was an astronaut, so space flight is in his blood. Space Adventures, on behalf of Richard Garriott, contacted both NASA and the Russian Space Agency to find out if Garriott could fly to space as a tourist. While NASA said no, the RSA said it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to research such a mission and millions more to do it. Garriott paid for the research to find out how much a private space visit would cost and RSA came back with the large figure of \$20 million. While Garriott had recently sold Origin Systems to EA, this was the time the stock market crashed and the disaster of 9/11 and Garriott saw a lot of his fortune evaporate. Since Garriott couldn't afford to go at that time, Space Adventures started to look for someone else to take the initial private space tourist flight and found Dennis Tito. Tito has since made history and is credited as being the first private space tourist. Though Space Adventures now has millions in cash from pre-paid reservations for sub-orbital flights, there are no sub-orbital airline seats to book today. Space Adventures currently invests in the space tourism vehicle development businesses, hoping to one day fill their reservations and spawn a whole new travel and vacation industry. With both Space Adventures and Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic focused

on producing an aircraft and both having working prototypes that have completed test flights, private sub-orbital travel could be a reality in 2008.



Richard Garriott continues to pursue his passions for bringing interactive virtual worlds alive and his love of space travel. He has become a legend in game development and amassed a fortune, which lets him keep eccentric hobbies such as his hilltop castle home and investing in bringing space travel to the masses. Maybe one day we'll be able to take a flight on Space Adventures to Ultima Space Station.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF SCOTT ADAMS

ADVENTURE GAME DESIGNER

By DeadDrPhibes

Back in the late 1970s when PC gaming was just beginning to take off, one man in particular was responsible for the advent of text adventure games on home PCs; Scott Adams.



While the colossal cave adventure had been around for some time on mainframe PCs, Adams brought the genre to the home PC, beginning with *Adventureland* in 1978. *Adventureland* was a relatively short text based adventure game using a two word (verb noun) parser and written in BASIC. Even within this fairly restrictive medium, *Adventureland* was a clever and engrossing game that made players use their imagination to come up with some rather oddball solutions to the various puzzles. Adams' adventure titles could easily be compared to the popular

room escape type games found all over online gaming sites today. The player is presented with a seemingly random set of inventory items and must come up with often rather unusual ways of using them to complete the game.

Adams published 17 adventure games between 1978 and 1984, including such titles as *Secret Mission*, *Pyramid of Doom*, and *Savage Island*. These titles were available on several of the platforms of the time, including TI99/4a, AppleII, Commodore Vic 20, Amiga, etc. His last published game from this period was the graphic adventure *Return to Pirates Isle*, a text adventure with graphics instead of text descriptions. While there was no true 'point and click' interactivity with the images, this game can easily be said to be the precursor of the now common room escape games on free gaming sites.

I first played *Adventureland* on my TI 99/4a, which required a cartridge that ran the game interface and loaded individual adventures from either a tape or disk drive. I had a blast playing these quirky things. If you're curious and want to take a stab at an original Scott Adams Adventure, I'll post links to sites where you can either play a Flash version online or download an emulator and ROM, all free and legal of course.

As it turns out, Mr. Adams lives only a few hours away from me in Wisconsin, USA. I took the liberty of shooting him an email with a few questions and he got back to me within a few days with these responses:

What inspired you to write your first text adventure game?

I played *Colossal Caves* on a DEC Mainframe. I wanted to do a game on my TRS-80 Model 1 that would use strings in Basic and this seemed like a good concept.

What were the biggest challenges/obstacles you had to face while creating games in the late 70s and early 80s?

Memory size and lack of any secondary storage. It wasn't until the time of the Commodore 64 that disk drives started to be affordable. The other

problem was lack of standardization. A game would have to be rewritten over and over for all the different computer systems then available.

What games do you play these days?

Everquest 2 on the PC and on the Xbox 360 I am still playing Oblivion and King Kong. I try lots of games and recently enjoyed Titan's Quest for a few weeks, but EQ2 is the only game to hold my interest for long term. Oblivion is a distant second to that with about 60 hours played so far.

What would you consider the greatest achievement (so far) of your gaming career?

Probably being the first company to specialize in gaming for the home computers.

What projects are you working on these days?

I am working a little bit on a new adventure game based on the old testament but haven't done much on it recently.

What developments would you like to see in gaming in the next 10 years?

Tough question. Certainly the appeal of the Xbox 360 is due to the ease of use for gamers. No drivers, no video cards or O/S to worry about. It would be nice if Vista will help the PC industry head in the same direction.

Many of your original text adventures are available online via free game websites. How do you feel about this?

They have asked me for permission first and I have told them to go ahead. It is wonderful there are still folks interested in replaying my classics.



What, in your opinion, is the best game on the market today?

Oh tough one! If we are talking single player then it would be Oblivion, if MOG then EQ2. Between the two, I would have to say EQ2 would rank number one. I have tried virtually all the current MOGs including WoW and I still think EQ2 is heads and shoulders above them all.

Scott Adams adventures are available to play online via flash or in a downloadable format at:

<http://www.msadams.com> Scott Adam's yahoo mail list group on computer gaming:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ComputerGaming> - Yahoo Group specifically on Scott Adam's games.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ScottAdams> - Scott Adam's Yahoo Group



By Derf



IN A BAR WITH SID MEIER (CONTINUED)

4 slated for release this fall. Many of the features of the original *Railroad Tycoon* show up in Sid's greatest game – *Civilization* (1991), the title for which he is probably best known.



According to Wikipedia, Sid borrowed many technology tree ideas from a board game by the same name published in the UK in 1980 and by Avalon Hill in 1981. *Civilization* is a turn-based strategy game in which you attempted to take a group of settlers all the way to the space colonization age. Along the way there are other leaders to conquer and technologies to discover. The game has stood the test of time by being continually for sale and expanded upon for 15 years. The latest incarnation, *Civilization IV* is published by Sid's Company – Firaxis software. Sid also made a space based game similar to *Civilization* called *Alpha Centauri* (1999).

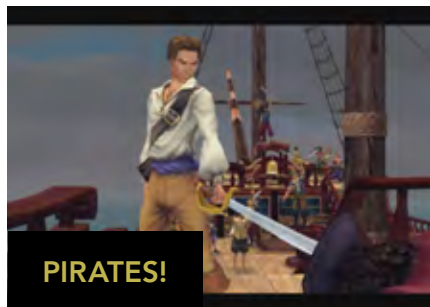
Sid Meier's more notable releases, as listed in the Wikipedia entry:

- *Spitfire Ace* (1984) — is Sid's first game that he made while playing a major role in the game creation stage.



- *NATO Commander* (1984)
- *Solo Flight* (1984)
- *Kennedy Approach* (1985) — one of the first games to use a software voice synthesizer
- *F-15 Strike Eagle* (1985) — one of the first combat flight simulators
- *Silent Service* (1985), a World War II submarine simulation game, and Meier's first foray out of flight sims.

- *Sid Meier's Pirates!* (1987)



- *F-19 Stealth Fighter* (1988)
- *F-15 Strike Eagle II* (1989)
- *Covert Action* (1990)
- *Railroad Tycoon* (1990), an economic simulation game, that paints the early development of railroads in the United States and Europe, a time when competition between railroad companies was very fierce
- *Civilization* (1991), Meier's most successful game to date. It has lived through several versions (see below) and sold over 6 million copies. This game is a turn-based strategy game.
- *Pirates! Gold* (1993)
- *Colonization* (1994), a turn-based strategy game themed on the early European colonization of the New World, starting in 1492 and lasting until the age of independence in 1850. To achieve victory in this game, the player must declare independence, and win in a revolutionary war against their mother country in Europe (France, England, The Netherlands, or Spain).
- *Civilization II* (1996) A remake of Sid Meier's successful *Civilization*; Brian Reynolds was lead designer on the game.
- *Sid Meier's Gettysburg!* (1997)
- *Sid Meier's Antietam!* (1998)
- *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* (1999) Brian Reynolds was lead designer on this adaptation of *Civilization* to an outer space theme. *Alpha Centauri* is set in a futuristic setting on an alien world, with ideological factions substituting for civilizations. This is a much more versatile version of *Civilization*, featuring economics and unique military customization, as well as diplomacy.



- *Civilization III* (2001), a remake of his classic game with improved rules, graphics and gameplay. This is a turned-based strategy

game allowing you to go from the Ancient Times to Modern Times. It features diplomacy much like that of Meier's other game, *Alpha Centauri*, and also introduces Culture. This installment makes the *Civilization* series the best selling PC series to date.

- *SimGolf* (2002), a joint project with the Sim- masters at Maxis



- *Sid Meier's Pirates!* (2004), a remake of the acclaimed *Pirates!* game from 1987, updating the graphics and featuring some entirely new game play elements and an all new ballroom dancing segment.
- *Civilization IV*, released October 25, 2005. *Civilization IV* is the newest game in the *Civilization* series. A full 3D engine replaces the isometric maps of *Civilization II* and *III*. This installment adds the concept of Religion to the game, building upon both the Culture and Diplomacy elements from previous incarnations.
- *Sid Meier's Railroads!* (expected Fall 2006) When Take 2 shut down PopTop Software and folded it into Firaxis, Meier once again became responsible for the *Railroad Tycoon* series, and this is billed as the sequel to *Railroad Tycoon 3*.



There are few in the gaming business that have the creativity seen from Sid Meier. The Academy of Interactive Arts and Science voted him into its "Hall of Fame," and in 2002, he was honored with an induction into the Computer Museum of America's Hall of Fame. I doubt Sid was in that bar, heck I don't even know if he drinks. I do know that he has fed my gaming appetite since there was something upon which to play games. So today, I raise my glass to a brilliant game designer. Long live Sid Meier!

2OLD2PWN CLAN LAN: SOMETHING DEMENTED THIS WAY COMES

By RogueRedneck



I joined 2old2pwn in October of 2005 and a few months later recall bringing up to my wife the subject of going to a clan LAN. She told me that I must have completely lost my mind if I thought I was going to go play video games and leave her home alone with the kids.

It was then that a funny thing happened. My wife was sucked into the world of 2old2play and 2old2pwn. It started by her lying on the couch and laughing at the interactions between the other players and me while we were playing. Then, she started reading the site under my account, DubbleORedneck, and made some posts on the forums. She eventually opened her own account, DixieBelle, on December 23, 2005 and immediately joined the clan.

This was important to explain how I found myself on the road at 4 AM on Thursday, June 29th, on my way to Pittsburgh for what would turn out to be one of the greatest weekends of my life.

It was a long grueling 11 hour drive that took Dixie and I from Tennessee to Pennsylvania. We braved many hardships along the way, including regular phone calls from Cowboy Bates, Barracuda52774, and dpaden wanting to know where we were so they could beat us to the hotel. (They did....)

Dixie and I pulled up in front of the Rodeway Inn at 4 PM local time and saw the first members of our degenerate crew standing in front of the hotel. The hotel was conveniently located over 1000 yards from the nearest school so that KidMach wouldn't violate his parole. There was kweenie1969 and her husband, Gutteral Rumble, dpaden, Ming Li, Cowboy, and the flame haired Cuda, who was easy to pick out since he was busy in a bush when we arrived. We settled into our circa 1970 rooms and then met up with NoVARaif, CurvyBunky, and BlimeyLimey before heading out looking for nourishment.

We ended up at the Lonestar Steakhouse, which was located next door to the Quaker Steak & Lube restaurant. Let me just pause here to say that we don't have these establishments in the South and I was a little concerned. The steak part wasn't a problem but the lube part made me wonder. Do you get the lube as a side item included with your meal or is it extra? What weight do they use? But then I realized...

At the restaurant, we were treated to the first of many statements I like to call "Cowboyisms." We ate a good meal and found that there was none of the uneasiness you sometimes feel when surrounded by people you've never met before. We easily fell into our forum and XBL roles and were soon making fun and laughing with and at each other. We just genuinely enjoyed being together in person for the first time

We finished the night back at the hotel just talking and preparing for the first official day of the LAN. Before the day finished, we greeted the arrival of GopherGoat, Lord Kerdaq (god complex), HexionBean, Count Fartula, and his friend, Eddie. Eddie has since become a member of the site and our newest clan member, allniteRawk. Most of us retired to our rooms at about 1 AM in preparation of the next day.

LEFT TO RIGHT: MING LI, DPADEN, CUD



LEFT TO RIGHT: COWBOY, ROGUE, KWEEN, GUTTER (IN BACK), NOVA



The next morning began at approximately 9 AM with a meeting in the coffee shop (Nova's Room). It is important to note that we all packed for a 3 day party. Nova came to the LAN prepared for an extended siege. This man arrived with a truck full of TVs, suitcases, wires, switches, first aid kit, assorted varieties of coffee, and both a coffee machine and espresso machine. The man meant business.



TEAM HOOB (CURVY, KWEEN, DIXIE)

We entered the conference room at about 9:30 AM and began to unload the equipment. At this point, Nova realized there could be a power distribution problem and went to work on the problem with the help of Gutter and the in-

2OLD2PWN CLAN LAN (CONTINUED)

terference of Cuda. I won't go into the details of what was done. You can read Nova's article for the technical aspects of the party. I get paid to arrest people and not to play with electricity, unless I'm tasing said people; in which case, I have a LOT of fun with electricity. In short, if you ever have a LAN Party, I highly suggest bringing a Nova with you.

The day progressed and we witnessed the arrival of Cabel, Walladog, KidMach, Blue Steihl, itsBillykiller, Durnan, waterboy, IACO, and Yountdog. We were all surprised when Yountdog arrived because none of us knew he was King Kong's stunt double (we put him in the corner next to Blimey because we figured, if he got hungry, he could have the Canadian). Everyone found somewhere to play and was hooked into the power grid. At this point, the conference room looked a lot like the cockpit of the Millenium Falcon, but you gotta do what you've gotta do.

I don't remember a lot of the actual gameplay that followed. On this first official day, several of us walked over to the restaurant next door, the Eat'N'Park. Here, despite the lack of sweet tea or Dr. Pepper, we enjoyed a decent meal. After Walla had been brutally forced into ordering the salad bar, we were witness to the first stroke of genius of the 2006 2old2pwn LAN.

I'm not sure how it started but someone mentioned that it would be funny to get a large rubber phallic device. We could use it to strike at those who we felt needed it. Walla suggested that we should name it "Rubber Justice." Thus was named the clan mascot.

Within the hour, Walla, Cuda, Dixie, and I were at the local Adult Store where Walla informed the clerk (who was not a man of great wit nor did he appreciate our humor) that Dixie, my wife, wanted the largest rubber dong they had in stock. We left minutes later with two 16" rubber dongs and a 3 foot blow-up doll with a coaster in her head. Walla conned the local gas station into giving us a Magic Marker and we returned to the hotel.

As we were standing outside preparing to unveil our purchases, a woman drove up, got out of her car, and apprehensively approached us. She was wearing nice business attire and appeared lost. When she saw Cuda writing on Rubber Justice and Dixie holding the doll, Walla informed her that she probably didn't want to be here and she chose to leave the premises. Go figure.

We entered the building and christened Cowboy with the dual Justices.

There was minimal confusion as others arrived as Nova and Gutter worked to get everyone hooked up as quickly as possible. Before long, I found my self sitting next to KidMach. It was then I discovered that Kid is not as annoying in person as he is on XBL... he's worse. I lost count of the number of head butts and dong beatings he received but they were many and often. I officially announce that he may be the site Timmy.

One of the key moments of the LAN was the arrival of itsBillykiller. He arrived and soon discovered that Cowboy had left to retrieve his girlfriend. Billy felt compelled to call Cowboy a few times to express his displeasure. Billy and Cowboy debated his absence from the LAN (the finer points were quite interesting) and came to an agreement. Cowboy would come back or Billy would hurt him.

Cowboy arrived at the LAN at 1:30 AM on Saturday morning and asked me, "How's Billy?" He was informed that Billy was, well, Billy... at 1:30 AM... drunk... and tired. Moments later, they met and Cow-

boy was reduced to the equivalent of a cold and frightened Chihuahua puppy. He covered behind his girlfriend for protection, but there was no hope.

Over the next day, we received more members in the form of mr sleestak, who soon violated the blow up doll, and the surprise guest, LB75Player. LB is a sneaky little guy, who convinced his wife, Curvy, that he wasn't coming to the LAN but then made a surprise 5 AM arrival. He had to wake her up from a drunken stupor, but she appeared happy to see him. I think this is typical, if I had to live with LB, I'd keep myself on the verge of unconsciousness as well.



The rest of the LAN is a blur of HALO, laughter, absurd aliases, and threats of violence. We played til the wee hours of Sunday morning when our 24 port switch died and could not be revived despite the best efforts of Nova. Walla even tried to assist by offering his advice to "Slap it with a stainless steel spatula" but, alas, the switch was gone.

We were temporarily back in business when it was discovered that Cowboy brought a 16 port switch but, before we could hook up the new switch, we suffered yet another casualty. The blow up doll collapsed under the combined force of Kid and Walla. CPR was administered by Kid but she did not survive.

Sunday morning, and it was a subdued crowd that arrived at the conference room to gather their belongings and head back to their boring, incomplete lives. Hugs were given and hands were shaken. Someone, I honestly can't say who, put Rubber Justice and the deflated doll in Cuda's suitcase in hopes of detaining him at airport security and we all went our separate ways.

In the end, it was a good time had by all. We laughed and cried. We played HALO, consumed alcohol and slapped each other with rubber dongs.

BEST CLAN LAN EVER!!!!



ON BACK WALL (L-R): KID, DURNAN, HEXION, LORD, COUNT, RYAN, ALLNITERAWK
MIDDLE ROW (L-R): BLUE, WALLA, IACO, 'CUDA, YOUNT, SLEESTAK, ROGUE (TEABAGGIN' COWBOY), BLIMEY, WATERBOY, BILLY
FRONT ROW (L-R): DPADEN, GOPHER, CURVY, DIXIE, COWBOY, CHRIS (COWBOY'S G/F), MING, LB, NOVA
MISSING FROM PHOTO: KWEEN, GUTTER

2OLD2PWN INAUGURAL LAN PARTY

HOW MANY SYSTEMS DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE CIRCUIT BREAKERS POP?

By NoVARaif

The official 2old2pwn clan LAN party was scheduled from Friday, June 30th until Sunday, July 2nd, with early birds arriving Thursday evening, June 29th, for an evening of eating, drinking and socializing.

Much consideration was given to location, since the clan is spread across the globe. The chosen hotel, the Rodeway Inn, located in Coriapolis, PA had the right price, decent accommodations, and a decent conference facility. Two other big pluses were that there was an Eat 'n Park restaurant on one side, and a Sheetz gas station on the other, so our late night food needs would be easily met.

Despite the various issues detailed here, the LAN could not have gone better. 2old2pwn truly is the Best Clan Ever!!! A successful LAN party is not determined so much by where it's held, rather by the people in attendance. We want to share as much as we can about our experience, so that other clans can grow from our experiences as we did.

Twenty-eight clan members, and friends in Attendance (by GamerTag): AllniteRawk, Barracuda52774, BlimeyLimey13, Blue Stiehl, Chris (Cowboy's girlfriend), Count Fartula, Cowboy Bates, Curvy-Bunky, DixieBelle75, Dpaden70, Durnan, GopherGoat, Gutteral Rumble, HexionBean, IACO, ItsBillyKiller, Kid-Mach, Kweenie1969, LB75Player, Lord Kerdaq, Ming Li, Mr Sleestak, NoVARaif, RogueRedneck, Ryan (Mr Sleestak's friend), WallaDog, Wat3rboy1011, and YountDog7

'Special' Guest appearances by: Rubber Justice (I and II), and Cowboy's Inflatable Girlfriend

GAMERS COMMENTS

Being able to game with so many clan members, with no lag whatsoever, was very awesome. At one point, we were time-sharing our gaming consoles as we had more attendees than there was room for equipment. Various 2 on 2, 4 on 4 and other tournaments took place.

TECHNICAL AND LOGISTICAL OVERVIEW

The hotel was visited prior to the actual LAN in an effort to check for any issues that would disqualify the hotel as the best place for the LAN party. The LAN party "advance team" was apparently shown only the hotel's best rooms, not the actual rooms in which the attendees would be staying. The advance team explained to the hotel that we would have about 30 people attending with TVs, gaming consoles, etc., and that we would need to have power, space and air conditioning to support them. The team was assured that it would not be a problem.

Once the LAN party weekend arrived and about 30 very eager clan members and friends began checking in, the shortcomings of the hotel became apparent. The hotel had been visited before the summer heat began, so room air conditioning had not been a concern. Most, if not all, attendees found that the room air conditioning produced a feeble gust of cold air, if anything. Fortunately, our days were spent in the conference room, and the nights were cool

enough to allow attendees staying on the second floor to leave their patio doors open. Some attendees found a relative of Mothra had invaded their rooms in the middle of the night. Parents should be warned to keep small children away from the warp-powered toilet, as they could be pulled into the spatial rift caused each time the toilet was flushed. Some found that their feet stuck to the room carpeting, while others found their carpeting crunchy. The televisions in most rooms were at least

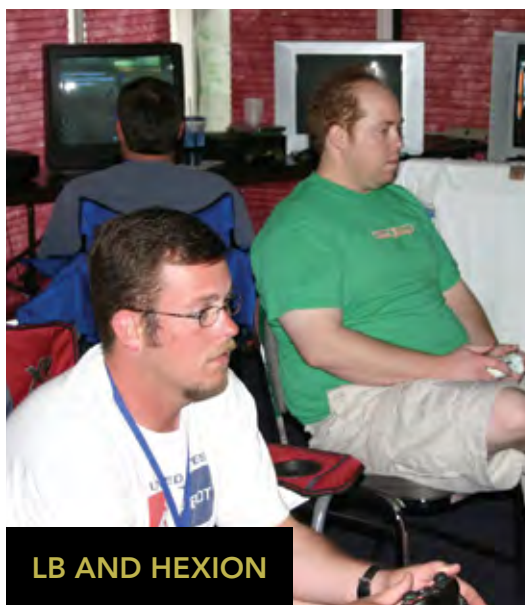
as old as the youngest clan members, with remote controls that needed 9V batteries to work. Remember the old Zenith TVs with Computer Space Command remotes? Yup, we had them!

Once we were able to start setting up the conference room for the LAN party on Friday morning, we found that power was going to be an issue, and space was going to be "cozy." The main room was about 35'x35'. We set up 4-6' round tables near the center of the room, and lined the walls with 3'x6' tables. We setup a router to provide DHCP and a 24 port switch to provide the needed connectivity. We pulled power from four different 20 amp circuits in the conference center (3 rooms total). Thankfully, we had all the heavy duty extension cords we needed to do the job. We used tons of gaff tape to get the power

and network connectivity where it needed to be, safely. We also masked off exposed portions of the windows with table cloths, paper and tape, both to keep excess light out, and maintain privacy of the party. Each night/early morning when the party wound down, we locked the front door of the conference center, and, for added security, parked a truck right in front of the door.



CENTER TO RIGHT COWBOY, DIXIE, ROGUE, LORD, BLIMEY



LB AND HEXION

2OLD2PWN INAUGURAL LAN PARTY (CONTINUED)

Partying began, in earnest, on Friday. Power outages on a couple circuits also started, in earnest, on Friday afternoon. After figuring out the best balance of TVs/gaming consoles per circuit, the power stabilized, and gaming continued. Gaming continued until the wee hours Saturday morning, then resumed mid-morning. The sequence was repeated on Saturday until 0110hrs Sunday morning, when the fully-populated 24 port switch opted for early retirement, probably due to stresses caused by unstable power. Fortunately, we had a spare switch, and downtime was limited to about 30 minutes.



HERE'S A DIAGRAM OF THE POWER AND NETWORK CONNECTIVITY DONE BY SOME FIRST TIME LAN PARTY ATTENDEES:

Cleanup efforts began on Sunday morning, with everyone checking out of the hotel by noon and getting on the road shortly thereafter. The withdrawal started before anyone got more than five miles from the hotel. Planning of the next LAN party started shortly thereafter.

IN SUMMARY, OUR LESSONS LEARNED

Hotel Rooms – check for:

- Hotel Staff and other guests - Look around and get a feel for both groups, as it'll tell you a LOT about the facilities themselves. (This lends itself to the next two lessons learned.)
- Room Air Conditioning – Does it work, and work well?
- Room Cleanliness - Clean Carpets, sheets, etc.
- Televisions – Are they modern enough to support A/V inputs for impromptu gaming?
- Toilets – Shouldn't be warp-powered and require Starfleet credentials to operate them safely.
- Power and lighting - Adequate number of power outlets and functional light fixtures in the rooms?

Conference Room Requirements:

- Air Conditioning – Is it adequate to handle heat from the electronics?
- Power – Assume five amps per conference attendee. Our conference room only had 100 amp service, which was almost woefully inadequate. We also suggest bringing a UPS for the networking equipment, at a minimum.
- Extension cords - Bring extra 16-gauge extension cords, in lengths from 50-150 feet, in the event that outlets are far from gaming areas.
- Gaming space – assume a minimum of 32sq ft per conference attendee (4'x 8'), including table space
- Space – adequate room to move around, in addition to gaming space, best to plan for a 4' path, if at all possible
- Restrooms – see previous comment about warp-powered toilets
- Food/Beverages – Must have space for food/bar setup, and coolers with ice, etc.
- Hotel Staff – Work out a schedule to have hotel staff restock bathrooms and empty trash daily.
- Xbox Headsets - Bring your headsets for team play. They make it easier to coordinate tactics across a room rather than yelling to one another.
- Wireless options - If possible, bring as many wireless-equipped game consoles as possible; it'll help limit the amount of wiring gaff-taped to the floors.
- Equipment spares – Where possible, bring extra networking equipment; switches, routers, etc., as it never hurts to have too much.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Overall, the inaugural 2old2pwn 2006 LAN party was a smashing success, and I think I speak for the clan in saying that we'd do it all over again, in a heartbeat, and cannot wait until the next 2old2pwn LAN party!!!

More pictures from the LAN party can be viewed at: www.hargest.com



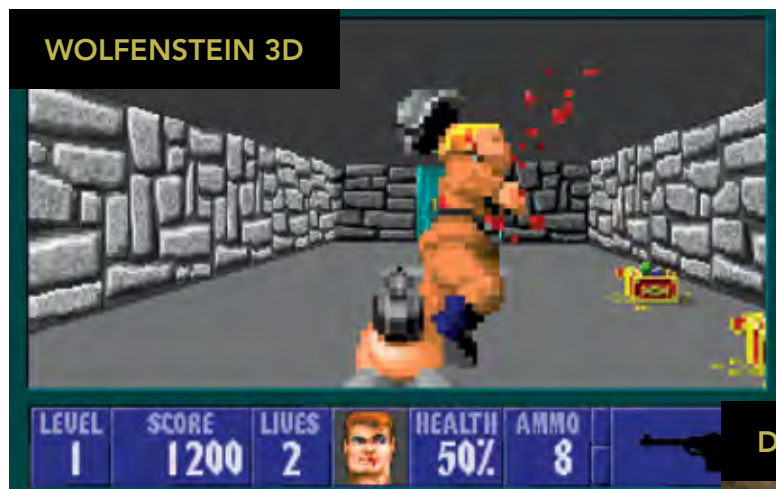
HISTORY OF THE FIRST-PERSON-SHOOTER

THERE AND BACK AGAIN: WOLFENSTEIN [3D] TO [CASTLE] WOLFENSTEIN

By CodeMonkey

The history of the first-person-shooter, commonly known as the FPS, is long and great. The FPS genre has seen memorable milestone games, interesting wannabe clones and a long line of groundbreaking technologies. What makes the FPS genre one of the most powerful video game designs is the edge of your seat thrill ride, violence, and its ability to consistently push the envelope of computing power.

The FPS game design was forever changed by the birth of *Wolfenstein 3D*. *Wolf3D*, its common name, was published by Apogee Software on May 5th, 1992 and given life by ID Software. The inspiration behind the game was a 1980s Muse Software computer game called *Castle Wolfenstein* and the follow-up game, *Beyond Castle Wolfenstein*. These adventure games would inspire the ID Software team to create an evolutionary work of art. *Wolfenstein 3D* was definitely not the first true FPS game; *Spasim* and *Maze War* might have been the founding fathers of the FPS, but they did not define the genre as it still exists today.



This relatively unknown company called ID Software built a game that involved, at the time, a significant amount of violence and destruction. They pushed the limit by designing a game that included many dark areas of our past, including the Nazi military reign. The game contained guns, blood (on certain releases), the ability to kill Germans by the truck load, and most importantly, the open use of the most feared symbol in the Western world: the Swastika. This foundation of violence and destruction would catapult the FPS genre to heights previously unknown to gaming.

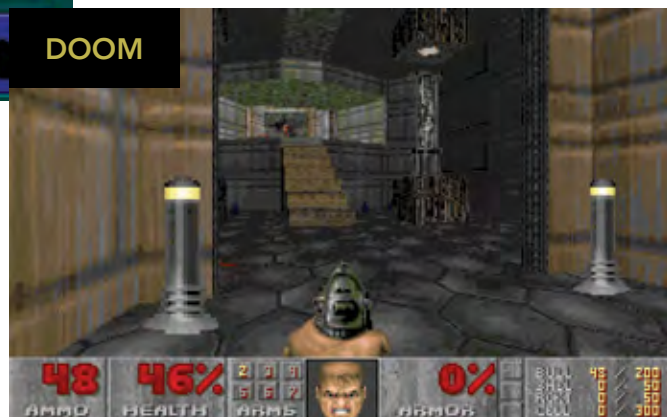
Germany, of course, was not exactly thrilled about the release of *Wolfenstein 3D*. Killing Germans is not nearly as bad as the open use of Nazi symbols and the anthem "Horst-Wessel-Lied" which is banned in Germany. *Wolfenstein 3D* was the first FPS to contain legal issues and cause copies to be confiscated in 1994 Germany. The legal issues in Germany

resulted in many game ports to be toned down or just not created at all. The *Super NES* version was modified to remove Nazi references and symbols. If the game was about escaping Nazi Germany, how fun would it be without any reference to the actual militia you were escaping?

Besides obvious fallout with the use of Nazi symbols, music, and poorly created non-native German speech, the game opened the eyes of developers around the world. Not only was it possible to create a game with a decent amount of violence, but the technology was reusable and could be enhanced for greater levels of detail. Game developers adopted the concept of "shareware" as a way to get their game to the market and provide evidence that it was a sellable solution. All these new ideas were formed by the success of *Wolfenstein 3D*.

Although *Wolfenstein 3D* was technically not the first game that had a first-person perspective and allowed you to shoot things dead, it was the first to ignite the desire for this genre. *Ultima Underworld* created the initial FPS technology. This technology was inherited by *Wolfenstein 3D* and was later improved upon in ID Software's *DOOM*. In 1993, *DOOM* would take center stage, leaving *Wolfenstein 3D* as a distant memory. The world of *DOOM* had textured floors and ceilings, moving platforms, and multi-player network capabilities!

DOOM defines the frightening FPS genre. The game would keep you on the edge of your seat killing imps and other evil demonic creatures while running through dark halls and unloading weapons at everything that moved. If played in the dark, *DOOM* was capable of putting you on the floor in a jump of terror. Gamers were so enthralled by the new *DOOM* franchise that they continued to play it for years. Gamers might say that *DOOM* was the first FPS that got them addicted to the genre. Game developers might say that *DOOM* proved just how powerful great technology and ideas could become.



Shareware assisted in the success of *DOOM* as it did with *Wolfenstein 3D*. Over 10 million people downloaded *DOOM* within the first two years of its creation. According to GameSpy, *DOOM* has been voted

HISTORY OF THE FIRST-PERSON-SHOOTER (CONTINUED)

by industry insiders as the number one best game of all time. Not only was *DOOM* widely successful – the ID Software team became the big boys on the block in terms of FPS technology. People wanted to be like ID and they went through the trouble to duplicate the efforts non-stop with “DOOM clones.”

In 1994, ID Software would hold the FPS genre with *DOOM II: Hell On Earth*. This release was very similar to the original *DOOM* with a few minor changes and additional levels and enemies. Although a major goal had been achieved, *DOOM II* was not sold as shareware, but as a product widely distributed in the stores. ID Software was building a very large bankroll in a very small period of time. During this year, a few other games spawned from the FPS clone clamor: *Rise of the Triad*, *Marathon*, and *System Shock*.



MARATHON

The 1994 “DOOM clones” each contained small changes in the technology that would, in the end, better the genre for many years. Apogee Software’s *Rise of the Triad*, initially developed as a sequel to *Wolfenstein 3D*, and added deliberate and unjust violence by inventing the “giblet.” A giblet is a little piece of flesh, internal organ, bone or entire limb of a larger body that is shot off during the bodies’ explosion. Although, Adrian Carmack is credited with the name, it was *Rise of the Triad* that initially thought of the concept. John Carmack and the ID Software team would make great use of this ‘giblet’ in *Quake*, as would Apogee Software in *Duke Nukem 3D*.



DUKE NUKEM 3D

Marathon was the next “DOOM clone” of the year, but this game utilized a feature that had been overlooked from prior FPS games: a real plot. The FPS genre, in general, has very little history in terms of plot usage, but *Marathon* started it all and later *Half-Life* would bring it to a completely new level of play. *System Shock*, another “DOOM clone” combined the new FPS-style gaming with the controls of a Role Playing Game (RPG) complete with horror elements. *System Shock* was a cult success story but did not take a main stage like *DOOM*.

The next big “DOOM clone” would change up the environment by adding a few imperial bases and Star Destroyers: LucasArts’ *Star Wars: Dark Forces*. LucasArts built its own DOOM-like engine called the “Jedi Engine” and added a feature that was rare in the FPS genre: alternative firing weapons. You could have a weapon that had multiple modes of fire! This feature would be utilized in future games. However, like *DOOM* and the other clones, *Dark Forces* was a slight enhancement on FPS game engines that came before it but it was still not true 3D. Within a year, that all would change.



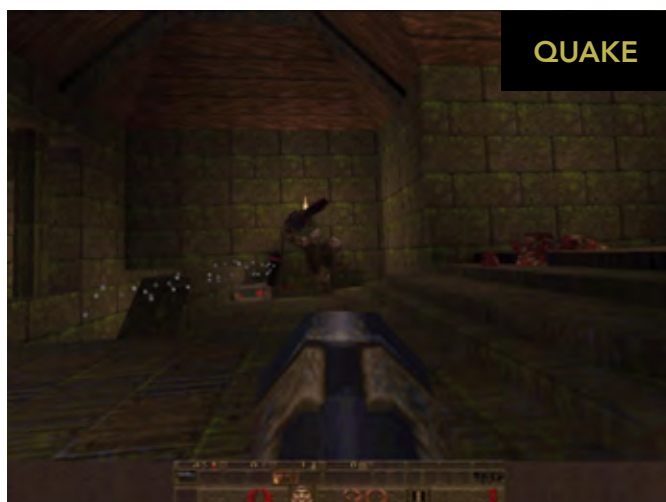
DESCENT

In 1995, Interplay Productions would publish a game known as *Decent*. This FPS title took the terms 3D and made it real. A full six degrees of freedom, coined 6DOF, and the player could fly their ship around the level in many directions. The maps were true 3D worlds where one could fly through a tunnel above them, below them, or in any direction in “3d space” and get lost in the environment. Those that found the ship in *Decent* too hard to control simply tossed the game aside as a “DOOM clone” and overlooked the complete 3D feature set unknown at that time. Ultimately, *Decent* failed to reach *DOOM*-like levels because of its difficulty to control, often requiring a joystick, and Interplays restrictions on level modifications. ID Software allowed independent developers to “mod” the game levels (known as “WADS”) to create new FPS game environments. These modders kept the game alive for years after it should have been forgotten. Interplay didn’t do this and thus its game has been forgotten.

DOOM 3



HISTORY OF THE FIRST-PERSON-SHOOTER (CONTINUED)



Lead designer John Romero and lead programmer John Carmack polished off their next big FPS in 1996. The title was known as *Quake* and towered over all games of its time with a brand new graphics engine and more textures than ever seen in a video game. The ID Software team predicted that the multiplayer gaming environment was the way of the future and designed *Quake* for local area networks along with standard “world wide” network play. The Internet was coming of age and it was time to move from our BBS systems into the world of the web. Gamers were able to play multiplayer games with people all over the world.

Duke Nukem 3D, released January 29th 1996, became an instant success by adding new flair to the FPS genre. *Duke Nukem 3D* is best known for the humor that was added throughout the game. The game lacked one specific feature that would make it lose the FPS battle in the future: TCP/IP network based multiplayer capabilities for the Internet. 3D Realms published the game ahead of its rival ID Software, but in the end ID Software would show the industry who was on top.

ID Software, again, created a graphically stressful FPS that requires gamers to think about moving out of the 486 processor era and jump on the *Pentium* bandwagon. *Quake* helped invent the need for the true “Gaming system” over a typical workstation of the time.

Most importantly, *Quake* made games of the same year, such as *Duke Nukem 3D* look simple by comparison. A year later *Blood* (built off the *Duke Nukem 3D* “build engine”) was released by Monolith and it still could not hold water compared to *Quake*’s revolutionary graphic design and multiplayer capabilities. It seemed that ID Software would own the FPS genre forever if they continued to keep ahead of the game.

Between 2004 and 2006, FPS sequels were the next best thing. Each sequel had new weapons, textures, eye-candy and thrill.



HISTORY OF THE FIRST-PERSON-SHOOTER (CONTINUED)

ID Software released *Quake II* a year later, in 1997, published by Activision. This release had no relationship to *Quake* except for the name "Quake" which was just used to draw sales. The game was an improved network model compared to the original release and the game engine was re-built again. When *Quake II* was purchased by PC gamers around the world and played on the Internet until the wee hours of the night, *GoldenEye 007* was released on the *Nintendo 64*. *GoldenEye 007* had a few FPS improvements, which included complex bullet-hit detection to maximize damage with "head shot" targets. The second large improvement was the game's ability to play on a console system without a mouse and keyboard

and be a success. Most FPS ports from older games failed to impress console gamers. This was a large milestone for the console gaming community because it would help realize the truth behind the console FPS genre.

GOLDENEYE



All of the technology that had been built over the past years came to life as a complete package during the years of 1998 and 1999. The PC would see a release of *Half-Life* by a small development studio known by few as Valve. Within two years Valve would see a huge success in their *Half-Life* franchise spurred by a great initial release and a "total conversion" modification of the game called *Counter-Strike*. This *Counter-Strike* modification, created by Minh Le and Jess Cliffe was so successful that they graduated college and went on to work at Valve software. These two college kids were part of the reason *Half-Life* and its modification *Counter-Strike* are still being played today.



QUAKE II





What makes the FPS genre one of the most powerful video game designs is the edge of your seat thrill ride, violence, and its ability to consistently push the envelope of computing power.



HISTORY OF THE FIRST-PERSON-SHOOTER (CONTINUED)

The same year that *Half-Life* hit the market two more FPS games were released: *Thief* and *Tribes*. *Thief* was one of the first FPS games that successfully tackled the idea of "stealth" in the genre. The concept of sneaking around the levels instead of blasting through doors running and gunning was lost on many FPS fans. The concepts, however, were solid and the game brought new aspects into an overly used military-type genre. The counterweight to *Thief* would be *Tribes*, which scoffed at sneaking and replaced it with team-oriented military vehicles. The vehicles employed in *Tribes* by today's standards are light; however, without the proof-of-concept in *Tribes*, vehicles may still be a rarity in current FPS titles. Although Dynamix's *Tribes* cannot be considered a huge commercial success, the influences were enough to change the future of FPS gaming.

ID Software made another run for the money with *Quake III Arena* by producing a multiplayer-only version of *Quake* for Internet play. Ten days before the launch of *Quake III*, yet another FPS known as *Unreal Tournament* was released. These two titles would battle head to head for years, trying to become the multiplayer FPS victor. The two competitors continue to battle it out today with *Unreal Tournament 2004* and *Quake 4*. A new *Unreal Tournament* is scheduled for release in 2007.

Finally, in the early 2000's a new breed of FPS game was born. To take on the challenge of building another great console FPS to match the success of *GoldenEye 007*, a company called Bungie Studios produced a "killer application" for the Microsoft Xbox. *Halo: Combat Evolved* took the elements of all games in the past and rolled them into a console game that sold over 6 million copies worldwide since its release in 2001. Many critics found that the game "bored them to tears" due to the overuse of specific areas throughout the game but nevertheless the game was a hit and sold many Xbox consoles by itself.

In 2002, the world would get the most in-depth tactical FPS it had seen thus far: *Battlefield 1942*. This game allowed players to operate vehicles, aircraft, and ships similar to *Tribes*. This element, along with the tactics required for the game allowed dedicated players to become truly skilled in team oriented destruction. In addition, this year Nintendo would turn *Metroid* into an FPS and call it *Metroid Prime*. There was no going back for Samus now; she was in the world of the first-person-shooter.



HALF-LIFE 2

Between 2004 and 2006, FPS sequels were the next best thing. Each sequel had new weapons, textures, eye-candy and thrill. Gamers would buy *DOOM 3* and find the graphics stunning but a simple re-hash of the original story. Players were bored with the concept that once excited them but had been redone dozens of times since *DOOM*'s original release. *Half-Life 2* was a great success and utilized more GPU than most FPS games (excluding *DOOM 3*) and allowed players to interact with their environment in new detail along with a realistic physics engine. *Halo 2* was an obvious success focusing highly on network play and became another huge success because of it. *Metroid Prime 2*, *Ghost Recon Advance Warfighter*, *Call of Duty 2*, and others sequels arrived for consumers to rip off the store shelves. All quality games with an increasing fan base.

If you mark *Wolfenstein 3D* as the game that defined the FPS genre back in 1992, you can see that FPS games have not been around all that long. Considering Mario has brought us games since the early 1980s, the FPS is a comparative teenager. The genre has made huge leaps and bounds after each developer's creation and continues to do so. Not all FPS games are outstanding success stories but each one brings something new to the table.

Where do we go from here? *Halo 3* is a highly anticipated game for the Xbox 360 that should be released in 2007. Perhaps the announced release of *Castle Wolfenstein* for the Xbox 360 will change history. Ironically, the game that evolved the genre plans to return after fifteen years in hopes to revolutionize the industry once again. We've proven that history is bound to repeat itself.



COUNTER STRIKE

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007



2OLD2CON

THE DIARY OF MIKEJAMES

By MikeJames

Now that 2old2con is over, many people from the 2old2play community are recovering from hangovers and kissing their spouses' asses for letting them go, as well as saving up for next years 2old2con.

The rest of you are simply asking yourselves, "what was it all about," and "Why didn't I go?" After seeing the pictures and Dantez's awesome video of the party, umm, I mean LAN, you're probably wondering what else happened. Well, as excellent as I am, I will tell you about the Mike James experience at the 2old2con LAN party.



I guess you could say it all started Thursday night, when I wasn't yet in Chicago. I received a phone call from Knaabi, one of our senior members, at roughly 9:30 pm, asking when I was coming to town. All I could hear in the background was music and a lot of noise from drunken people. At that point, the thought passes through my head, "Why didn't I take off Thursday too!?"

MY EXPERIENCE

Friday morning comes along and I'm ready to go. I pack the kid, my wife and myself into the car and we take off about 7:00 am to head to Kenosha, WI, where I'm from and where my parents still reside. Noon hits and I'm dropping off the wife and kid, saying a quick hello to the parents, then I'm back in the car headed to Chicago. It's now 12:30 pm and I still need to stop at the liquor store. Yeah, Mike James stopped at the liquor store to buy beverages. I run in, pick up a bottle of JD and head on out. 60 miles to go - 60 minutes and I'll be at an event I've been looking forward to since August, 2005.

Two hours later, after being stuck in Chicago traffic, I finally arrive at the 2old2con 2006. The first person I see is my roommate for the weekend, Dead Dr. Phibes. Fortunately, instead of having to search him out to get into the hotel room, he was pulling into the parking lot right behind me. But, who cares about the room as long as there is more than one bed, because I am not about to sleep in the same bed as DDP.

After dropping off my bags, I make my entrance. "What's up BITCHES!!?!?!!?!", I shout as I open the door. I can't even tell you the first person I met. The conference room was designed as two U shapes. One inside of the other with 30 TVs all throughout the room. What an awesome site to behold. The best part - everyone was over 25.

Friday was spent meeting people with whom I've played online and held conversations with in the forums. I was actually able to put faces to those names. Not a single person was fake. Everyone acted how he or she does online. The gamer tags do indeed go with peoples personalities. We may have told each other our real names, but hell, I have a hard enough time remembering gamer tags let alone real names.

LBSUTKE AND RIGHTHANDOF GOD



The first keg rolled into the room about 5 pm that first night. Either they went light on the keg or we're all alcoholics. That first keg was gone by 9 pm; completely empty and floating. I remember getting beer from somewhere else, but not quite sure who gave it to me. I do remember, however, eating other peoples Chicago style pizza. Hell, it was lying there and no one was guarding it, so why not eat?

Eventually, people started rolling out about 2:30 am. There was about 15-20 of us left and I was thirsty. I wanted booze. Funny thing is, someone left beer in the cooler... and... once again, no one was guarding it. "Anyone need a beer?" Four or five people came on up and I passed out the beer as if it was my own. Sorry to whoever's beer it was; you should have drunk it or brought it back to your room.

2OLD2CON (CONTINUED)

The next morning, about 10 am, a small group of us got together and went out for breakfast. It was just a little dive through restaurant but it did the trick. For eight bucks I had three eggs, two pancakes, toast, sausage, bacon and a glass of milk.

After returning to the hotel room I checked on the activities in the party room. Not a whole lot was going on and so I said to myself, "Be a wuss right now and get your ass back to the hotel room and take a one hour power nap." So that's what I did. Awaking at 1 pm refreshed, I head back to the party room.

About this time, the gaming is in full motion. From board games, *World of Warcraft*, *Halo 2*, *Chromebounds*, *Call of Duty 2* to even poker and drinking contests - it was all happening.

This time I jump on and play a little *Halo 2* since that's what everyone else was doing. I eventually went out for dinner to celebrate Jolly Rogers' and SysChaos' birthday.

Upon return, there was a keg waiting for us to tear into. This one lasted a little bit longer than the night before. A whole lot happened that night. To sum it up, I got drunk (like you didn't know that). Hell, everyone was drunk and we floated another keg. I was "volunteered" to do the raffle and speak in front of everyone. We handed out some bondage equipment and we got to see Phreaks with a strap-on. We also had a poker tournament, the Wheezin Geezers awarded Doodi and DSmooth with these cool-ass tokens of appreciation, (they were postcards from members of the Wheezin Geezer clan that couldn't make it all posted onto a frame) and, last but not least, we met a ton of great new people.

About 3 am everybody was leaving the party and heading back to their rooms. Then the saddest part of the LAN happened; the realization that it was over. When I would wake up the next morning, everybody would be leaving and on their way back to their normal lives. Tears were shed; handshakes were given and, hell, even some manly hugs.

The rest of my trip home doesn't really matter. What really matters is what happened at the 2006 2old2con and my experience.

HERE IS WHAT HAPPENED:

One hundred people all with the same hobby came together into one big room. We were all together without a single bad attitude and without a single bad experience. People traveled from all over the United States and some from Canada to really experience what defines 2old2play as a site above all others.

It's about gaming, but it's also about the real life friendships that are built. *Xbox Live* and 2old2play have become a meeting place for many people. Some great friendships were built at 2old2con, a few actual relationships (guy/girl, you pervert), and best of all, camaraderie.

If you didn't make it to the 2006 2old2con, you need to make it next year. There will definitely be another one. Start saving your money for plane tickets, hotel costs, booze and plenty of good times. I hope to see you at the 2007 2old2con.

-MikeJames



D-LINK GAMEFUEL

KILL LAG AND HOSTING PROBLEMS WITH D-LINK GAMEFUEL

By Tank

Lots of people in the forums ask about what router to buy, what router are others using, and what router is the best, etc. I thoroughly believe in the D-Link Gaming Router, which is specifically designed to maximize your gaming experience. Besides being a top notch firewall and router, it has specific features within it for online gaming and Xbox Live use to reduce lag.

D-Link has 2 gaming routers; they're both the same except one also has WiFi (802.11b/g) wireless networking (DGL-4300). The other is for wired connections only (DGL-4100). Both routers feature four 1GB Ethernet ports, so you can plug your wired devices in and network them together at top speeds.

Let's get started with the setup and configuration. This setup guide will focus on getting the most out of your Xbox 360 Live connection.

SECTION 1: WIRING IT UP

D-Link has an excellent graphical wiring diagram on its website. I recommend you take a look. Basically, if your Broadband Modem connects directly to your PC, the D-Link router will now go in the middle, with both devices plugging into it instead. Modem into the WAN port, PC into one of the 4 LAN ports. If you have a firewall/router already between your Broadband Modem and PC, the D-Link will replace that device.

DGL-4100 guide:

ftp://ftp.dlink.com/Gateway/dgl4100/QIG/dgl4100_QIG_100.pdf

DGL-4300 guide:

ftp://ftp.dlink.com/Gateway/dgl4300/QIG/dgl4300_QIG_100.pdf

SECTION 2: BASIC CONFIGURATION

Your D-Link router's factory TCP/IP address is 192.168.0.1. If you have some other device with that same address, you'll need to turn that other device off until your D-Link is configured. A similar thing to note is that your computer must also have a TCP/IP address starting 192.168.0.X where X is a number from 2-254. If your computer's address is something different, change it to 192.168.0.2 with a subnet mask of 255.255.255.0 and you should be able to talk to your new D-Link.

Once your router is turned on and your network settings are worked out, type 192.168.0.1 in Internet Explorer or your browser's address bar and click *GO*. This should load the D-Link router logon screen. The default setting is for no password. From there you'll be dropped into the main D-Link Router configuration screen with 2 wizard options -- Internet Connectivity Wizard and Wireless Security Wizard.

Click Internet Connection Setup Wizard. Most of these options are basic, so I'll just point out some important things.

Step1: Password: choose a good one. Make it at least 8 characters and try and use letters, numbers and special characters.

Step2: Hopefully your ISP is listed in the pull down. If not, you'll need to know a little something about how your ISP assigns your TCP/IP address. I've probably used 10 different ISP's and all but one have used the first option, DHCP. So pick that if you don't know, it's got the highest probability of being correct.

Step3: Sometimes your ISP locks your network card's hard coded address (MAC address) as the only system that can access the connection. If this is the case, click the *Clone* Button. Then type in a HOST name, which can be anything you like.



Lastly, click the *CONNECT* button and your router will save the settings and restart. Log back in using your new password and click *STATUS* in the top menu. In the STATUS menu, you are most concerned with the WAN section. You want to see the TCP/IP address, Subnet Mask, Gateway and DNS Server all filled in. If it's not, click the *DHCP Release* button then *DHCP Renew*, and wait a minute. If you still get nothing, the DHCP option you picked in Step 3 wasn't the option your ISP is using. You'll need to call them and list the options in Step 3's screen and find out which one to pick to be compatible with them.

SECTION 3: WIRELESS SETUP (IF YOU HAVE THE NON-WIRELESS MODEL YOU CAN SKIP THIS)

Step 1: You have to give your wireless network a name. This name is known as its SSID name. Any time you try and connect a wireless device to your wireless router, you need to specify the name or pick the name out of a list of available Wi-fi networks that are in range.

Step 2: There are 3 types of encryption to secure your wireless network against outsiders getting on and messing around. In order of strongest to weakest those are WPA2, WPA and WEP. If you want to put the time into researching what all your wireless devices can support, go ahead and do that and pick the appropriate option. If you don't know, pick the GOOD option which is WEP, the most compatible option that will work with everything.

Step 3: Wireless Password: This first screen generates a WEP Key from a password you give. You will use the WEP KEY to connect to your wireless network, not the password you type in. For your password it should be 20 characters and a mix of capital, small letters, numbers and special characters. Click NEXT and your WEP KEY will be generated, it will look like 1C347 68BC4 4F262 93E2F 1F750 9. Write this WEP KEY down somewhere, you'll need to type it into each wireless network device you have.

D-LINK GAMEFUEL (CONTINUED)

Finally, click *SAVE* and your router will reboot. Reconnect to the router once it resets.

Connecting your wireless devices is beyond the scope of this document. Every device, however, will need to know both your SSID and WEP Key, so make sure you have those remembered or written down and secured in a safe place.

SECTION 4: THE REST OF THE BASIC OPTIONS

LAN: If you're fine building your network based on the 192.168.0.X default configuration, you can leave this section alone. If your network was based on some other network, you will change that here in the IP Address box and adjust the Subnet Mask as required. Leave the rest of the settings alone and don't forget to *SAVE* Settings if you make changes. Keep in mind that if you change your router's LAN TCP/IP address, you'll now need to change your PC's networking information as well before you can connect to it again in Internet Explorer or another browser.

DHCP: I'm not going to get into advanced DHCP configuration but I'll give you the basics. Every device on your network needs the LAN TCP/IP address information, including your *Xbox 360*. If you only have one or two devices, you could set the network information manually. However if you have a few devices or just want a quick automated network device setup, I'd recommend you turn this on. Just click the *Enable DHCP Server* box at the top and click *Save Settings*. All the default options that are set when this gets turned on I expect will be fine for most people.

SECTION 5: ADVANCED SETTINGS

You could tinker in these advanced settings for days. I'll take you through the most important sections relevant to *Xbox Live* and let you read up on the others on your own. Most people won't need to go beyond the sections I walk you through.

SPECIAL APPLICATIONS: This screen opens inbound connections from the Internet to your home network. For most home users you can uncheck everything in the Application Level Gateway Config window, especially if you don't know what any of those options are. These leave doors open for hackers to attempt exploitation. If you connect to an office to work from home, you probably want to leave PPTP and L2TP and IPsec VPN checked (or just one of the three if you know specifically which one your office uses -- just ask your IT guy.)

GAMING: We need a very important option in here. In the Add Game Rule window, Enable should be checked. In the Select Game pull down, select *Xbox Live*. Then click the *SAVE* button under Schedule. You should see *Xbox Live* listed now in the Game Rules List window. If you do, click *Save Settings* at the top.

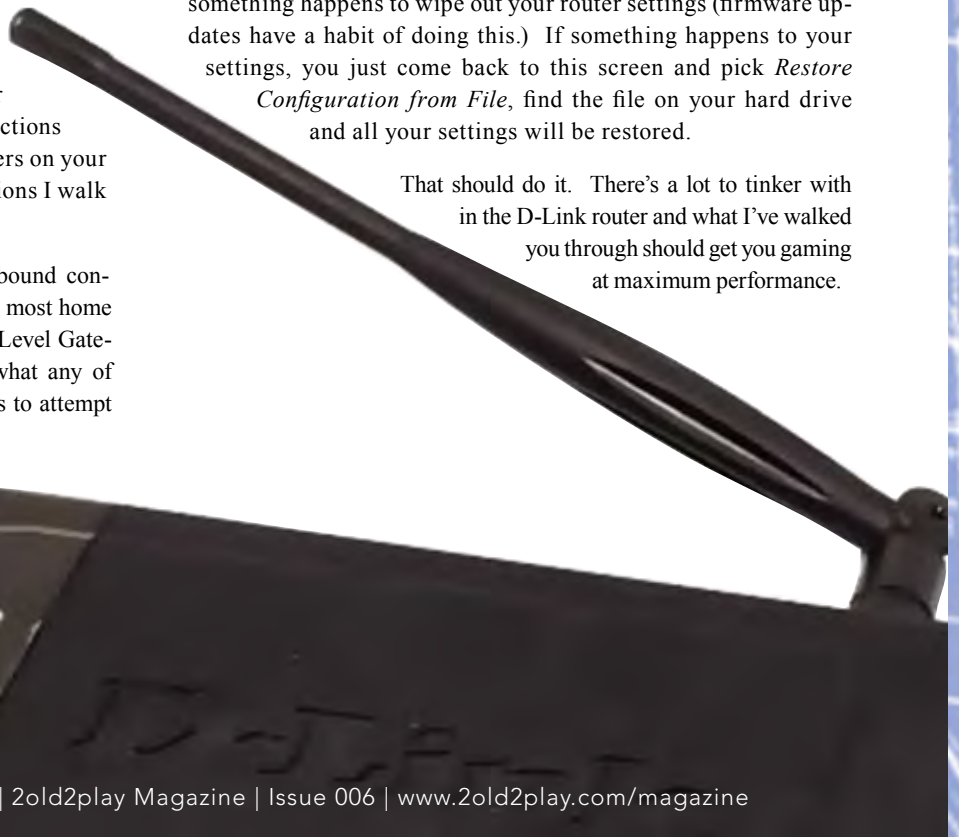
GAME FUEL: This is the heart of the D-Link router which gives it maximum gaming performance. Click Enable Game Fuel and a few configuration windows will open. You can leave all these set to the default options and click *Save Settings* at the top.

FIREWALL: Enable SPI should be checked. Enable DMZ is optional but I would recommend it. What I do is I manually set the TCP/IP address information on my *Xbox 360* and in here I click Enable DMZ and put the address of my *Xbox 360* in the DMZ IP Address box. So if I set my *Xbox 360* to 192.168.0.254, that's what I would put in the DMZ IP Address box. Why would you want to do this? It eliminates any connectivity problems if you host games. It may also help in gaming traffic flow speed because none of the game traffic should be processed by the firewall rules.

SECTION 6: FINISHING TOUCHES, THE TOOLS MENU

There are a number of useful settings things to think about enabling in the Tools menu. The first thing you should do once you're done tinkering is click *Tools*, *Admin*, and scroll to the bottom and pick *Save Configuration*. This will save a file to your PC hard drive with all router settings. You want to do this in case something happens to wipe out your router settings (firmware updates have a habit of doing this.) If something happens to your settings, you just come back to this screen and pick *Restore Configuration from File*, find the file on your hard drive and all your settings will be restored.

That should do it. There's a lot to tinker with in the D-Link router and what I've walked you through should get you gaming at maximum performance.



SEPTEMBER RELEASES

THE ULTIMATE LIST OF GAMING GOODNESS IN STOCK THIS MONTH

TITLE RELEASE DATE

PLAYSTATION 2

King of Fighters 2006	9/4
World Championship Poker All In	9/4
Okami	9/5
Spyhunter : Nowhere to Run	9/5
Yakuza	9/5
NASCAR 07	9/6
Backyard Baseball 2007	9/12
IGPX	9/12
Lego Star Wars	9/12
NHL 07	9/12
NHL 2K7	9/12
One Piece : Pirates' Carnival	9/12
Rule of Rose	9/12
Bratz : Forever Diamondz	9/18
Cabela's Alaskan Adventure	9/19
Ford Bold Moves Street Racing	9/19
Open Season	9/19
Samurai Warriors 2	9/19
World Series of Poker	9/19
Corvette GT Evolution	9/25
Family Feud	9/25
NBA 2k7	9/25
NBA Live 07	9/25
Dance Dance Revolution SuperNova	9/25
Fast & the Furious	9/26
Greg Hastings Tour Paintball Max'd	9/26
Just Cause	9/26
Valkyrie Profile 2	9/26
Zatchbell	9/26

PSP

World Championship Poker	9/4
Guilty Gear	9/5
Loco Roco	9/5
MotoGP	9/5
Ultimate Ghost 'N' Goblins	9/5
NASCAR 07	9/6

TITLE RELEASE DATE

Bomberman	9/12
Bounty Hounds	9/12
NHL 07	9/12
Rengoku II	9/12
Open Season	9/19
The Godfather	9/19
World Series of Poker	9/19
NBA Live 07	9/25
Bubble Bobble Revolution	9/26
NBA 07	9/26
Online Chess Kingdoms	9/26
Spectral Souls	9/26
Stacked	9/26
WTF : Work Time Fun	9/26

XBOX

Spy Hunter	9/5
NASCAR 07	9/6
Fuel	9/11
Lego Star Wars II	9/12
NHL 07	9/12
NHL 2K7	9/12
Ford Bold Moves Street Racing	9/19
Open Season	9/19
NBA 2K7	9/25
NBA Live 07	9/25
Just Cause	9/26

XBOX 360

Possession	9/1
ShadowClan	9/1
Test Drive Unlimited	9/5
Xbox Live Arcade Unplugged	9/5
Lego Star Wars II	9/12
NHL 07	9/12
NHL 2K7	9/12
Cabela's Alaskan Adventure	9/19
Open Season	9/19
Xbox Live Vision Camera	9/19

SEPTEMBER RELEASES (CONTINUED)

TITLE	RELEASE DATE
Samauri Warriors 2	9/19
The Godfather	9/19
World Series of Poker	9/19
NBA 2K7	9/25
NBA Live 07	9/25
Import Tuner Challenge	9/25
Just Cause	9/26

GAMECUBE

Lego Star Wars II	9/12
One Piece Pirates' Carnival	9/12
Bratz	9/18
Open Season	9/19
Baten Kaitos Origins	9/25
Backyard Baseball 2007	9/26
Naruto II	9/26

DS

Hardcore Pool	9/1
Micro Machines V4	9/1
Pokemon Mystery Dungeon	9/1
Konductra	9/5
Ultimate Card Games	9/6
Mario Hoops 3on3	9/11
Cooking Mama	9/12
Harvest Moon DS	9/12
Lego Star Wars II	9/12
Mech Assault : Phantom War	9/12
Mega Man ZX	9/12
Bratz	9/18
Danny Phantom	9/18
Pokemon Mystery Dungeon	9/18
Contact	9/19
Dragon Quest Heroes	9/19
Open Season	9/19
The Suite Life of Zack and Cody	9/19
Alex Rider	9/25
Maro vs Donkey Kong 2	9/25
Bubble Bobble Revolution	9/26
Mage Knight Destiny's Soldier	9/26
Rainbow Island Revolutions	9/26

TITLE	RELEASE DATE
WINDOWS	
Devil May Cry 3	9/1
GTR 2	9/1
Luxor Mahjong	9/1
Backyard Baseball 2007	9/4
Emperor's Treasures	9/4
Perimeter	9/4
Prison Tycoon 2	9/4
Secret Files: Tunguska	9/4
Call of Juarez	9/5
Faces of War	9/5
Joint Task Force	9/5
Origin of the Species	9/6
Coffee Tycoon	9/11
Company of Heroes	9/11
Glow Worm	9/11
Pacific Storm	9/11
Avatar The Last Airbender	9/12
Everquest II Classic	9/12
Lego Star Wars II	9/12
NHL 07	9/12
NeverWinter Nights 2	9/14
Age of Pirates	9/18
Face Factory 2	9/18
Patriot National Guard	9/18
Rag Doll Kung Fu	9/18
The Guild 2	9/18
Ford Bold moves Street Racing	9/19
Open Season	9/19
Fuel	9/25
Inspector Parker	9/25
NBA Live 07	9/25
ParaWorld	9/25
Poker SuperStars II	9/25
Caesar IV	9/26
El Matador	9/26
Family Fued	9/26
Just Cause	9/26

